

A TREASURY OF
MYSTIC TERMS



A TREASURY OF MYSTIC TERMS

PART III
SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE &
PRACTICE



VOLUME 15

JOHN DAVIDSON

RADHA SOAMI SATSANG BEAS

Published by:
J. C. Sethi, Secretary
Radha Soami Satsang Beas
Dera Baba Jaimal Singh
Punjab 143 204, India

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First edition 2019

24 23 22 21 20 19 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-93-88733-28-1

Printed in India: XXXXXXXX

EDITED AND LARGELY WRITTEN BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

WITH THE HELP OF AN INTERNATIONAL TEAM

A Treasury of Mystic Terms has been compiled using the collective skills of an international team of researchers, contributors, assistant editors and readers with a wide variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. All members of the team are spiritual seekers, most of whom have found inspiration and encouragement in the teachings of the mystics of Beas in India. All those involved have given freely to this project, both as a source of inspiration for themselves, and as a way of showing to others the essential unity behind all the apparent variety in religion, philosophy, and mysticism.

Everybody has a perspective or a bias – coloured glasses through which they view the world. So although every attempt has been made to handle each entry within its own religious or mystical context, if any particular perspective is detected, it will inevitably be that of the contributors and their perception of mysticism. This does not mean, of course, that the contributors have always been in agreement. The preparation of the *Treasury* has often resulted in healthy debate!

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

IN THE COURSE OF COMPILING AND WRITING THE *TREASURY*, the editorial team have drawn on two major sources. Firstly, the scriptures and writings of mystics and others who have written on spiritual and mystical matters. Secondly, the works of scholars concerning these texts and their associated traditions. To all of these, we will be forever grateful. Among the mystics, we owe especial gratitude to the masters of Beas who have been, and who remain, the primary source of spiritual inspiration and perspective for most of the *Treasury*'s editorial team.

Sources of the many citations have been given in the references, endnotes, and bibliography. Among these are some that must receive special mention:

The translations of the Buddhist *Dhammapada* are founded mostly upon the work of S. Radhakrishnan and Narada Thera.

Most of the translations of the *Bhagavad Gītā* have drawn upon the earlier translations of S. Radhakrishnan and Swami Tapasyananda.

Quotations from the *Ādi Granth* are from English translations endorsed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

The sayings of Heraclitus are found only as fragments, quoted in the works of other writers of antiquity. Various scholarly numbering systems exist for these fragments, the system employed here being that used by Philip Wheelwright in *Heraclitus* (Princeton University Press, 1959).

Most of the translations of Rūmī's *Maśnavī* are based upon the work of R.A. Nicholson.

Many scholarly translations of Zarathushtra's *Gāthās* into European languages have been made from defective Pahlavi translations. The translations here are from the Avestan, and are based largely on the original work of Dr I.R.S. Taraporewala.

For translations of the Buddhist Pali texts, we have made extensive use of *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi (1995); *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, tr. Maurice Walshe (1995); *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya*, 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2000); *The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Aṅguttara Nikāya*, tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi (2012); all published by Wisdom Publications of Somerville, Massachusetts; together with various

translations by Thanissaro Bhikkhu, published by Access to Insight (accesstoinsight.org and dhammatalks.org).

The indigenous Guaraní of eastern Paraguay, made up of three large subgroups – the Mbyá, the Paí Cayuá, and the Avá-Chiripá – are described in books and articles by the most notable experts in this field, Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, León Cádogan, Alfred Métraux, and Egon Schaden. Most of the information used for the Guaraní mystical terms derives from these scholars' studies of the Mybá and Avá-Chiripá. If a term is general to all indigenous Guaraní, it is labelled (G); if a term is known only to apply to the Avá-Chiripá subgroup, it is labelled (AC). The transliteration conventions used for all Avá-Chiripá terms are the same as those used in Miguel Alberto Bartolomé's article, *Shamanism and Religion Among the Avá-Chiripá*, which resulted from his field studies in the northeastern region of Paraguay in 1968 and 1969. Bartolomé explains that since Paraguayan Guaraní has an officially recognized written form, he does not use phonetic symbols except the letter 'y' for the sixth guttural vowel.

Particular acknowledgement must be made of the extensive compilation of material made by Dr Javad Nurbakhsh in his 15-volume *Farhang-i Nurbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf*, translated by Terry Graham *et al.* (1984–2001) as *Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology*. Dr Nurbakhsh's considerable contribution to Sufi literature has been of great help to us in the compilation of the Sufi entries in the *Treasury*, and we have drawn upon his work, both in the Persian and its English translation. The numerous extracts are reprinted by permission of Khaniqahi-Nimatullahi Publications.

Excerpts from *The Philokalia: The Complete Text, Compiled by St Nikodimos of the Holy Mountain and St Makarios of Corinth*, ed. & tr. G.E.H. Palmer, Philip Sherrard, Kallistos Ware (Faber & Faber, London), copyright © by The Eling Trust (1979, 1981, 1984, 1995) are reprinted by permission of Metropolitan Kallistos and The Eling Trust.

Existing dictionaries and encyclopaedias are naturally of great assistance when preparing a work such as the *Treasury*. We gladly acknowledge the particular help we have received from *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, Georg Feuerstein (Paragon House, New York, 1990); *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. H.A.R. Gibb *et al.* (Brill, Leiden, 1960–2005); *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni (Rosen, New York, 2002); *Japanese-English Buddhist Dictionary*, Daito Shuppansha (Tokyo, 1965); *A Dictionary of Japanese Buddhist Terms*, Hisao Inagaki (Nagata Bunshodo, Kyoto, 1984); *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, Damien Keown (Oxford University Press, 2003); *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, Ven. Nyanatiloka (Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka, 1988); *The*

Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, Robert Buswell & Donald Lopez (Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2014); *A Comprehensive Etymological Dictionary of the Hebrew Language for Readers of English*, ed. Ernest Klein (Carta Jerusalem, University of Haifa, 1987); *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Judaica Multimedia, Jerusalem, 1997); *Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1901–6, jewishencyclopedia.com); *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (Robert Appleton Co., 1907–14); *Wikipedia* (wikipedia.org, 2001–); *Hawaiian Dictionary*, Mary Kawena Pukui & Samuel Elbert (University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1986); *Te Aka: Māori-English, English-Māori Dictionary and Index*, John Moorfield (maoridictionary.co.nz); *A Dictionary of the Maori Language*, Herbert Williams (nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-WillDict.html); and *The A to Z of Jainism*, Kristi Wiley (Vision, New Delhi, 2006).

Thanks are also due to Dr John Smith, now retired from the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Cambridge University, for his Unicode character fonts.

The proposed twenty-three volumes of this work, of which sixteen have now been published, constitute a non-profit, educational, and scholarly project. The elucidation of terms and the numerous citations receive significant commentary, often bringing fresh insights regarding their meaning and relationship to other terms, with inter-faith comparison highlighted by the arrangement of entries under common subject headings. By these means we seek to contribute to spiritual understanding for global human benefit and the promotion of spiritual, religious, and cultural open-mindedness. We recognize that, in all probability, the authors of the original source texts wrote their works for the benefit of humanity, not for personal profit or acclaim. We have endeavoured to walk in their footsteps.

ABBREVIATIONS

General

Abbreviations that are a common part of written language are not included in this list.

C4th	fourth century (<i>e.g.</i>)
<i>cf.</i>	<i>confero</i> , compare (L. I compare)
<i>col.</i>	column
<i>fol.</i>	folio
<i>ff.</i>	and the following (pages, lines, <i>etc.</i>)
<i>lit.</i>	literally
n.	foot- or endnote(s)
<i>passim</i>	here and there throughout (L)
p.	page
pp.	pages
pron.	pronounced
ret.	retrieved web page, followed by the month and year of retrieval
►1 ►2 ►4	Indicates a yet-to-be-published entry in Parts I, II, or IV

Dates

<i>b.</i>	born
<i>c.</i>	circa, about
<i>d.</i>	died
<i>fl.</i>	flourished
<i>r.</i>	reigned or ruled
AH	<i>Anno Hegirae</i> , Muslim lunar calendar, from 622 CE, the Hegira (<i>al-Hijrah</i>), the year of Muḥammad's flight to Madīnah
BCE	Before Common Era, equivalent to BC.
CE	Common Era, equivalent to AD.
SH	Solar Hijri, the official solar calendar of Iran and Afghanistan, starting on the vernal equinox.

Languages

A	Arabic	Av	Avestan	Fr	French
AC	Avá-Chiripá	C	Chinese	G	Guaraní
Am	Aramaic	Es	Spanish	Gk	Greek

H Hindi	Md Mandaean	Pv Pahlavi
He Hebrew	Mo Māori	S Sanskrit
Hw Hawaiian	P Persian	Su Sumerian
J Japanese	Pa Pali	T Tibetan
L Latin	Pk Prakrit	U Urdu
M Marathi	Pu Punjabi	

Sources Cited

See *Bibliography* for full details of published works. Published collections of the writings of Indian Saints have been referred to in source references as below. Other collections published as the *Bānī*, *Granthāvalī*, *Padāvalī* or *Shabdāvalī* of various Indian Saints have been similarly abbreviated.

<i>Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār</i>	<i>Shabd Sār</i>
<i>Charaṇdās Jī kī Bānī</i>	<i>Bānī</i>
<i>Dariyā Sāhib ke chune hue Shabd</i>	<i>Chune hue Shabd</i>
<i>Dhanī Dharamdās Jī kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i>	<i>Granthāvalī</i>
<i>Kabīr Sāhib kā Bījak</i>	<i>Bījak</i>
<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i>	<i>Sākhī Sangrah</i>
<i>Keshavdās Jī kī Amīghūnt</i>	<i>Amīghūnt</i>
<i>Kullīyāt-i Bulleh Shāh</i>	<i>Kullīyāt</i>
<i>Mīrā Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>	<i>Bṛihat Padāvalī</i>
<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i>	<i>Sindhu</i>
<i>Nāmdev kī Hindi Padāvalī</i>	<i>Padāvalī</i>
<i>Ravidās Darshan</i>	<i>Darshan</i>
<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i>	<i>Vāṇī</i>
<i>Shrī Nāmdev Gāthā</i>	<i>Gāthā</i>
<i>Tulsīdās kī Bārahmāsī</i>	<i>Bārahmāsī</i>
<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvāle kī Shabdāvalī</i>	<i>Shabdāvalī</i>

Other books and texts cited are abbreviated as below. Full details are in the bibliography:

AAF1–2	<i>Awṛād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb</i> , 2 vols., Abū-al-Mufākhīr Yahyā Bākhārī, ed. Iraj Afshār.
AETR	<i>Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion</i> , Stephen Eskildsen.
AFCS	<i>Access and Fixed Concentration</i> , Venerable Sujivo.
AGC	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Pritam Singh Chahil.
AGG	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Dr Gopal Singh.
AGK	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: Khalsa Consensus Translation</i> , tr. Dr Sant Singh Khalsa.

AGT	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib</i> , 4 vols., tr. Dr Gurbachan Singh Talib.
AH1–2	<i>Against Heresies</i> , in <i>The Writings of Irenaeus</i> , 2 vols., tr. A. Roberts & W.H. Rambaud.
AKKS	<i>Ācārya Kundakunda's Samayasāra</i> , tr. A. Chakravarti.
ALSE	<i>As Long As Space Endures</i> , ed. Edward Arnold.
AMAS	<i>Al-Muʿjam al-Ṣūfī</i> , Khānam Dr Suʿād al-Ḥakīm.
AMBB	<i>Ānāpānasati</i> , Buddhadhāsa Bhikkhu, tr. Bhikkhu Nagasena.
AMM	<i>Dīwān-i Ḥakīm Abū al-Majd Majdūd ibn-i Ādam Sanāʿī Ghaznavī</i> , ed. Mudarris Riḏavī.
ANNK	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> , tr. Ñānavara Thera & Bhikkhu Kantasilo.
ANT	<i>The Apocryphal New Testament</i> , tr. M.R. James.
ANTB	<i>Anguttara Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
APAK	<i>Aṣṭa Pahuda</i> , Acharya Kundkund, tr. Paras Das Jain Niyaytirṭhi.
APG1–4	<i>Agni Purāṇa</i> , 4 vols., tr. N. Gangadharan.
APJ1–2	<i>Ādi Purāṇa</i> , 2 vols., Āchārya Jinasena, tr. Pannalal Jain.
APJJ	<i>Ādi Purāṇa</i> , Jinasena.
ASAM	<i>A Manual of Abhidhamma</i> , tr. Nārada Mahā Thera.
ASPP	<i>Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā Prajñā-pāramitā</i> , ed. Rājendralāla Mitra.
ATS1–2	<i>Asrār al-Tawḥīd fī Maqāmāt al-Shaykh Abī Saʿīd</i> , 2 vols., M. ibn Munavvar, ed. & intro. Muḥammad Raḏā Shafāʿī Kadkanī.
AVPS	<i>Anathma Vigarhana Prakaranam</i> , tr. P.R. Ramachander.
AYA	<i>The Holy Qurʾān</i> , tr. ʿAbdullah Yūsuf ʿAlī.
AYAY	<i>American Yoga</i> , Carrie Schneider.
AZJW	<i>The A to Z of Jainism</i> , Kristi Wiley.
AZPD	<i>A to Z Photo Dictionary</i> , Mark Schumacher.
BAEZ	<i>The Bodhidharma Anthology</i> , Jeffery L. Broughton.
BAMT	<i>Bhagavatī Ārāḍhanā</i> , Ācārya Śivārya, with <i>Vijayodayāṭikā</i> , Aparājita Sūri.
BAST	<i>Baddei ha-Aron u-Migdal Ḥananel</i> , Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Gaon.
BAUS	<i>Buddha Abhidhamma: Ultimate Science</i> , Mehm Tin Mon.
BC	<i>The Books of Jeu and the Untitled Text in the Bruce Codex</i> , tr. Violet MacDermot.
BDBL	<i>The Bodhisattva Doctrine in Buddhist Sanskrit Literature</i> , H. Dayal.
BDC	<i>The Book of Divine Consolation of the Blessed Angela of Foligno</i> , tr. M. Steegman.
BDV1–6	<i>The Book of the Discipline</i> , 6 vols., tr. I.B. Horner.
BEW	<i>Little Book of Eternal Wisdom and Little Book of Truth</i> , Henry Suso, tr. James M. Clark.
BGT	<i>Bhagavad Gītā</i> , tr. Swāmī Tapasyānanda.
BKKS	“Der Begriff der Kawwana in der alten Kabbala,” G.G. Scholem.
BLD1–3	<i>Buddhist Legends</i> , 3 vols., Buddhaghosa, tr. E.W. Burlingame.
BLPD	<i>Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues</i> , J. Sallis.

BNJM	<i>Bàopǔzǐ nèipiān jiàoshì</i> , Wáng Míng.
BRTH	<i>The Biographies of Rechungpa</i> , Peter Roberts.
BSGW	<i>Buddhism and Science: Breaking New Ground</i> , ed. B.A. Wallace.
BSPS	<i>Bulleh Shah</i> , J.R. Puri & T.R. Shangari.
BSS	<i>The Bústán</i> , Shaikh Musliḥu-d-Dín Sa'dí Shírázī, tr. H. W. Clarke.
BSSS	<i>Bullā Sāhib kā Shabd Sār</i> .
BTCT	"Body temperature changes during the practice of g Tum-mo yoga," Herbert Benson <i>et al</i> .
BTIT	<i>Buddhist Thought</i> , P. Williams with A. Tribe & A. Wynne.
BWIC	<i>Ibn 'Ata' Illah: The Book of Wisdom</i> , tr. V. Danner, and <i>Kwaja Abdullah Ansari: Intimate Conversations</i> , tr. W. Thackston.
BYAD	<i>Bhaktiyoga</i> , Aswini Kumar Datta, tr. Gunada Charan Sen.
CAG	"Coptic Apocryphal Gospels," tr. F. Robinson.
CBTW	<i>The Complete Book of Tai Chi Chuan</i> , Wong Kiew Kit.
CCEY	"Chod – Cutting through the Ego," Yangthang Rinpoche.
CDBB	<i>The Connected Discourses of the Buddha</i> , 2 vols., tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
CDBZ	<i>A Concise Dictionary of Buddhism and Zen</i> , Ingrid Fischer-Schreiber, Franz-Karl Ehrhard, Michael S. Diener.
CDHR	<i>The Civilized Demons</i> , Malati J. Shendge.
CDP	<i>The Collected Dialogues of Plato</i> , ed. E. Hamilton & H. Cairns.
CEI	<i>The Concise Encyclopedia of Islam</i> , Cyril Glassé.
CGAP	<i>St Augustine: Concerning the City of God against the Pagans</i> , tr. Henry Bettenson.
CGM	<i>The Call of the Great Master</i> , Daryai Lal Kapur.
CH	<i>The Clementine Homilies</i> , tr. Thomas Smith <i>et al</i> .
CHA	<i>The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles</i> , Clement of Rome, tr. James Donaldson.
CHLD	<i>The Craft of the Heart</i> , Ajaan Lee Dhammadharo, tr. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.
CIMK	<i>Calm and Insight</i> , Bhikku Khantipalo.
CIT1–8	<i>Concordance et Indices de la Tradition Musulmane</i> , 8 vols., A.J. Wensinck <i>et al</i> .
CMSS	<i>Concentration and Meditation</i> , Swami Sivananda.
CPM	<i>The Canonical Prayerbook of the Mandaeans</i> , tr. E.S. Drower.
CPMS	<i>Cultivating Perfection</i> , Louis Komjathy.
CR	<i>The Clementine Recognitions</i> , tr. Thomas Smith.
CSCM	<i>Cāritrasāra</i> , Cāmuṇḍarāya.
CSTP	<i>Cave in the Snow</i> , Vicki Mackenzie.
CU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. William Johnston.
CUCW	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Clifton Wolters.
CUEU	<i>The Cloud of Unknowing</i> , tr. Evelyn Underhill.
CVAB	<i>The Call of the Vedas</i> , A.C. Bose.

CVCP	<i>Contemplation et vie contemplative selon Platon</i> , A.-J. Festugière.
CWA1–37	<i>The Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo</i> , 37 vols.
CWJC1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint John of the Cross</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
CWSV1–9	<i>Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda</i> , 9 vols.
CWTA1–3	<i>The Complete Works of Saint Teresa of Jesus</i> , 3 vols., tr. E.A. Peers.
DASN	<i>Dīvān-i ‘Aṭṭār</i> , incl. <i>Qaṣā’id</i> , <i>Tarjīāt</i> , va <i>Ghazaliyāt</i> , ed. S. Nafīsī.
DBRD	<i>Dialogues of the Buddha</i> , Part I, tr. T.W. Rhys Davids.
DCBP	<i>The Dhammapada and Commentary</i> , tr. Nārada Thera, ed. Bhik-khu Pesala.
DCMU	<i>Dadu: The Compassionate Mystic</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DCS	<i>Digital Corpus of Sanskrit</i> , Oliver Hellwig.
DDB1–2	<i>Dādū Dayāl kī Bānī</i> , 2 vols.
DDDA	<i>The Development and Distribution of Dejjiao Associations in Malaysia and Singapore</i> , Chee Beng Tan.
DFQM	<i>Dīwān ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , ‘Umar ibn ‘Alī Sharaf al-Dīn Abū al-Qāsim al-Miṣrī.
DHA	<i>Dīvān-i Khwājah Ḥāfiẓ Shīrāzī</i> , ed. Abū al-Qāsim Anjavī Shīrāzī.
DHM	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> .
DHWC	<i>The Dīvān-i-Ḥāfiẓ</i> , 2 vols., Khwāja Shamsu-d-Dīn Muḥammad-i-Ḥāfiẓ-i-Shīrāzī, tr. H. Wilberforce Clarke.
DIH	<i>Dīvān-i Ḥāfiẓ</i> , ed. Qāzi Sajjād Ḥusayn.
DL	<i>Divine Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DMLW	<i>A Dictionary of the Maori Language</i> , Herbert Williams.
DNK1–5	<i>Drops of Nectar</i> , 5 vols., tr. Andreas Kretschmar.
DNMT	<i>Dionysius the Areopagite on the Divine Names and Mystical Theology</i> , tr. C.E. Rolt.
DNVE	<i>Dzogchen and the Nine Vehicles of Enlightenment According to the Nyingma Tradition</i> , David Boaz.
DNVS	<i>Digha Nikaya</i> , tr. Sister Vajira & Francis Story, ed. ATI.
DOI	<i>A Dictionary of Islam</i> , T.P. Hughes.
DP1–4	<i>The Dialogues of Plato</i> , 4 vols., tr. B. Jowett.
DS1–19	<i>Dàoshū shí’èr zhǒng</i> , 19 titles, Liú Yīmíng.
DSM	<i>Discourses on Sant Mat</i> , Hazur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
DSMM	<i>Dharma-saṅgraha</i> , ed. Max Müller, H. Wenzel & K. Kassawara.
DSSK	<i>Dariya Sahib: Saint of Bihar</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
DSZ	<i>The Divine Songs of Zarathustra</i> , I.J.S. Taraporewala.
DTK	<i>The Daoist Tradition: An Introduction</i> , Louis Komjathy.
DTL	<i>Die to Live</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
DZ1–1487	<i>Dàozàng</i> , refers to the <i>Zhèngtǒng dào-zàng</i> , 1487 titles in 60 vols.
EBRB	<i>Encyclopedia of Buddhism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Robert Buswell.
EDSB	<i>Early Daoist Scriptures</i> , Stephen Bokenkamp.

EDYF	<i>Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga</i> , Georg Feuerstein.
EEPR	<i>The Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion</i> , ed. Ingrid Fischer-Schreiber <i>et al.</i>
EHB	<i>The Essentials of Hinduism</i> , Swami Bhaskarananda.
EIM	<i>Early Islamic Mysticism</i> , Michael Sells.
EIMP	<i>Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice</i> , Venerable Sujiva.
ERNG	<i>The Essential Rabbi Nachman</i> , tr. Avraham Greenbaum.
ESRR	<i>Èrbǎi wǔshí suì rén ruìshí jì</i> , Yáng Sēn.
ET1–2	<i>The Encyclopedia of Taoism</i> , 2 vols., ed. Fabrizio Pregadio.
FCWM	<i>Fools Crow: Wisdom and Power</i> , Thomas Mails.
FFNA	<i>Fawā'id al-Fu'ād</i> , Niẓām al-Dīn Awliyā', Kvājah Amīr Ḥasan 'Alā Sijzī & Khvājah Ḥasan Šānī Niẓāmī.
FHAC	<i>Food for the Heart</i> , Ajahn Chah.
FKG	<i>The Feats of the Knowers of God</i> , Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad-e Aflākī, tr. John O' Kane.
FLML	<i>The Fire of Love and The Mending of Life</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Richard Misyn, ed. Frances Comper.
FLRR	<i>The Fire of Love</i> , Richard Rolle, tr. Clifton Wolters.
FMIA1–9	<i>Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah</i> , 9 vols., Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn al-'Arabī, ed. Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn.
FNI1–15	<i>Farhang-i Nūrbakhsh: Iṣṭilāḥāt-i Taṣawwuf</i> , 15 vols., J. Nūrbakhsh.
FRQJ	<i>Al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī wa al-Fayḍ al-Raḥmānī</i> , Shaykh 'Abd al-Qādir Jīlānī, ed. Shaykh Uns Mihrah.
GCDP	<i>Great Clarity</i> , Fabrizio Pregadio.
GDDS	<i>Gyān Dīpak</i> , Dariyā Sāhib.
GGG	<i>From Glory to Glory</i> , tr. H. Musurillo.
GJ	<i>The Gospel of Jesus</i> , John Davidson.
GKTM	<i>The Gelug-Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra</i> , The Dalai Lama & Alexander Berzin.
GLBA	<i>Gifts He Left Behind</i> , comp. Phra Bodhinandamuni, tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
GLMT	<i>The Great Liberation</i> , tr. A. Avalon (John Woodroffe).
GLTS	<i>The Golden Letters</i> , tr. John Reynolds.
GNKT	<i>The Guide (Nettippakaraṇa)</i> , Kaccāna Thera, tr. Ñāṇamoli.
GPM1–2	<i>The Guide of the Perplexed</i> , 2 vols., Moses Maimonides, tr. Shlomo Pines.
GPMM	<i>Guide for the Perplexed</i> , Moses Maimonides, tr. M. Friedlander.
GRPS	<i>Guru Ravidas: The Philosopher's Stone</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
GSV	<i>Gheranda Samhita</i> , tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.
GTE1–3	<i>The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment</i> , 3 vols., Tsong-kha-pa, tr. Lamrim Chenmo Translation Committee.
GVM	<i>The Great Vohu Manah and the Apostle of God</i> , G. Widengren.
GWPT	<i>A Guide to the Words of My Perfect Teacher</i> , N. Pelzang.

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- HA *Mašnavī Haft Awrang*, ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. M.M. Gīlānī.
 HAAI *Al-Ḥikam al-‘Aṭā’iyah*, Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh, comm. Ibn ‘Abbād al-Nafazī al-Turandī.
 HCW *Hadewijch: The Complete Works*, tr. Columba Hart.
 HDP1–9 *Handbooks for Daoist Practice*, 10 vols., tr. Louis Komjathy.
 HDP3 *Yellow Thearch’s Basic Questions*, tr. Louis Komjathy.
 HDP8 *Redoubled Yang’s Fifteen Discourses*, tr. Louis Komjathy.
 HEMI *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Moshe Idel.
 HHTT *Head & Heart Together*, Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
 HM *Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa’*.
 HMCA *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*, Terese Tse Bartholomew.
 HPSD *Hathapradipika of Svātmarama*, tr. Swami Digambarji & Pt. Radhunathashastri Kokaje.
 HSB *Hadith Sahih al-Bukhari*, tr. Muhsin Khan.
 HSCP *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*, tr. Arthur Waley.
 HSDM *The Hunger of the Soul: A Spiritual Diary*, Nancy Mayorga.
 HSI1–2 *A History of Sufism in India*, 2 vols., Saiyid Athar Abbas Rizvi.
 HSM *Hadith Sahih Muslim*, tr. Abdul Hamid Siddiqui.
 HTZM *Hua-t’ou: A Method of Zen Meditation*, Stuart Lachs.
 HYP *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, tr. Pancham Sinh.
 HYPM *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, Swami Muktibodhananda & Swami Satyananda Saraswati.
 HZZS *How Zen Became Zen*, Morten Schlütter.
 ICW *I Ching or Book of Changes*, tr. Cary F. Baynes.
 IDL *Introduction to the Devout Life*, St Francis de Sales, tr. M. Day.
 IEZB *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism*, Helen Baroni.
 IK *Kitāb al-Insān al-Kāmil*, ‘Azīz al-Dīn Nasafī, ed. Marijan Molé.
 IKMH *An Introduction to the Kabbalah*, Moshe Hallamish, tr. Ruth Bar-Ilan & Ora Wiskind-Elper.
 ILQO *The Immortal*, Yang Sen, tr. Stuart Alve Olson.
 IMNZ *Te Ika a Maui*, Richard Taylor.
 IMSR *Islamic Mysticism: Sufism*, T.C. Rastogi.
 IMVI *Indian Mythology*, Veronica Ions.
 IP1–2 *Indian Philosophy*, 2 vols., S. Radhakrishnan.
 IUDG1–5 *Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn*, 5 vols., Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad al-Ghazālī, ed. ‘Allāmah Zīn al-Dīn Abī al-Faḍl al-‘Irāqī.
 IVRD “Importance of the Vidhana Texts in Ritualistic Development,” Pradnya Kulkarni.
 JB *The Jerusalem Bible*.
 JCL *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures*; in *The CD-ROM Judaic Classics Library*.
 JH1–108 *Dào zàng jīng huá*, 108 titles.
 JMAK *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide*, Aryeh Kaplan.
 JNOD *Jerónimo Nadal: Obras y doctrinas espirituales*, Miguel Nicolau.

JS1–2	<i>Jewish Spirituality</i> , 2 vols., ed. Arthur Green.
JSJW	“Jina Sutra”; jainworld.com.
JTPM	<i>Jacopone da Todi, Poet and Mystic</i> , Evelyn Underhill.
JY1–315	<i>Dàozàng jǐyāo</i> , 315 titles in 10 vols., ed. Chén Dàlì et al.
JYMS	<i>Jaina Yoga</i> , R. Williams.
KA1–10	<i>Kashf al-Asrār va-‘Uddat al-Abrār</i> , 10 vols., Abū al-Faẓl Rashīd al-Dīn Maybudī, ed. ‘Alī Aṣghar Ḥikmat.
KB	<i>The Jerusalem Bible</i> , English text rev. & ed. Harold Fisch.
KBMS	<i>Keeping the Breath in Mind & Lessons in Samadhi</i> , Ajaan Lee Dhammaddharo, tr. Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.
KG	<i>Kabīr Granthāvalī</i> , ed. Shyām Sundardās.
KHI	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Fakhr al-dīn Ibrāhīm Hamadānī ‘Irāqī</i> , ed. Sa‘īd Nafīsī.
KI	<i>The Koran Interpreted</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
KIFT1–4	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn</i> , 4 vols., Muḥammad ‘Alī ibn ‘Alī al-Tahānawī, ed. Aḥmad Ḥasan Basaj.
KJV	<i>The Bible: Authorized King James Version</i> .
KM	<i>Kashf al-Maḥjūb</i> , al-Hujwīrī, tr. R.A. Nicholson.
KMM	<i>Kashf al-Maḥjūb</i> , Hujwīrī, ed. V.A. Zhukovsky.
KPA	<i>The Koran: With a Parallel Arabic Text</i> , tr. N.J. Dawood.
KSA	<i>Akhrāvatī: Kabīr Sahab kā Pūrā Granth</i> ; Belvedere.
KSBA	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shaykh Bahā’ī</i> , Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad ‘Āmilī, ed. Ghulām Ḥusayn Jawāhirī.
KSD1–10	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shams yā Dīvān-i Kabīr</i> , 10 vols., ed. B. Furūzānfar.
KSDS1–2	<i>Kullīyāt-i Shāh Dā’ī-i Shīrāzī</i> , 2 vols., ed. Maḥmūd Dabīr Siyāqī.
KSS	<i>Kabīr Sākhī Sangrah</i> ; Belvedere.
KSS1–4	<i>Kabīr Sāhib kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 4 vols.; Belvedere.
KSSS	<i>Kullīyāt-i Sa‘dī</i> , Shaykh Muṣliḥ Dīn Sa‘dī Shīrāzī.
KTJ	<i>Kitāb al-Ta’rīfāt</i> , al-Jurjānī, ed. ‘Ādil Anwar Khidr.
KVTD	<i>Kavitāvalī</i> , Tulsīdās.
KWGN	<i>Kabir: The Weaver of God’s Name</i> , V.K. Sethi.
LAD	<i>Letters of a Sufi Master</i> , tr. Titus Burckhart.
LATP1–2	<i>The Life of Apollonius of Tyana</i> , 2 vols., Philostratus, tr. F.C. Conybeare.
LBDF	<i>As Light Before Dawn</i> , Eitan Fishbane.
LBFD	<i>Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma</i> , tr. L. Hurvitz.
LDAC	<i>The Ladder of Divine Ascent</i> , John Klimakos, tr. Archimandrite Lazarus.
LKMS	<i>Loving-kindness Meditation</i> , Venerable Sujiva.
LMDS	<i>The Laws of Manu</i> , Wendy Doniger with Brian Smith.
LMTT	<i>The Life of Milarepa</i> , Lobsang P. Lhalungpa.
LOSM	<i>Light on Sant Mat</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
LPH	<i>The Ladder of Perfection</i> , Walter Hilton, tr. Leo Sherley Price.
LPYB	<i>Light on Prāṇāyāma: The Yogic Art of Breathing</i> , B.K.S. Iyengar.

LSN1–2	<i>The Lifestory of Naropa</i> , 2 parts, Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche.
LSNT	<i>The Life of Sāriputta</i> , comp. & tr. Nyanaponika Thera.
LSOC	<i>The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras</i> , tr. B. Watson.
LSPS	<i>Lion of Siddhas</i> , tr. D. Molk & Lama Tsering Wangdu Rinpoche.
LSS	<i>The Life of the Servant</i> , Henry Suso, tr. James M. Clark.
LVSL	<i>Lalita-vistara</i> , ed. S. Lefmann.
LWK1–5	“The Lore of the Whare-kohanga,” 5 parts, Elsdon Best.
LWW1–2	<i>Lore of the Whare-wānanga</i> , 2 parts, Te Matorohanga, tr. S.P. Smith.
LYDB	<i>Likkutim Yekarim</i> , Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezeritch, ed. Samuel ben Judah Leib Segal or Meshullam Feibush Heller.
MARB	<i>Mashrab al-Arwāḥ</i> , Rūzbihān Baqlī, ed. ʿĀsim Ibrāhīm al-Kayālī.
MASA1–2	<i>Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn</i> , 2 vols., al-Aflākī al-ʿĀrifī, ed. Taḥsīn Yāzījī.
MBAK	<i>Meditation and the Bible</i> , Aryeh Kaplan.
MBS	<i>Mīrābāī kī Shabdāvalī</i> , Belvedere.
MCT	<i>Miscellaneous Coptic Texts</i> , tr. E.A.W. Budge.
MDBB	<i>Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, ed. & rev. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
MDI	<i>Mystical Dimensions of Islam</i> , Annemarie Schimmel.
MDLS	<i>Mira: The Divine Lover</i> , V.K. Sethi.
MEIA	<i>Me ʿirat ʿEinayim</i> , Isaac ben Samuel of Akko.
MGK	<i>The Meaning of the Glorious Koran</i> , Marmaduke Pickthall.
MHCP	<i>The Manichaeon Hymn-Cycles in Parthian</i> , tr. M. Boyce.
MHK	<i>Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah</i> , ʿIzz al-Dīn Maḥmūd Qāshānī, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāʾī.
MHN	<i>Morals for the Heart</i> , tr. Bruce Lawrence.
MJR1–8	<i>The Mathnawī of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī</i> , 8 vols., tr. R.A. Nicholson.
MKAK	<i>Meditation and the Kabbalah</i> , Aryeh Kaplan.
MMA	<i>Monk of Mount Athos</i> , Archimandrite Sophrony, tr. R. Edmonds.
MMS	<i>Sri Guru Granth Sahib: English and Punjabi Translation</i> , 8 vols., tr. Manmohan Singh.
MMSI	“Moses Maimonides and the Sufis of Islam,” Tom Block.
MMSY	<i>Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra</i> , tr. K. Yamamoto, ed. T. Page.
MMTD	<i>Magic and Mystery in Tibet</i> , Alexandra David-Neel.
MNMK	<i>Moreh Nevukhim</i> , Moses Maimonides, tr. Yosef Kafi.
MNTB	<i>Majjhima Nikaya</i> , tr. Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
MOHE	<i>The Mystical Origins of Hasidism</i> , Rachel Elior.
MP1–2	<i>Mystical Poems of Rumi</i> , 2 vols., tr. A.J. Arberry.
MPA	<i>Meditation and Its Practices</i> , Swami Adiswarananda.
MPB	<i>A Manichaeon Psalm-Book</i> , Part II, tr. C.R.C. Allberry.
MRES	<i>The Music of the Republic</i> , Eva Brann.
MRJA	“Maori Religion,” Johannes Andersen.
MRM1–2	<i>Maori Religion and Mythology</i> , 2 parts, Elsdon Best.

MSA	<i>Manāzil al-Sā'rīn</i> , ed. S.L. Beaurecueil, tr. A.G.R. Farhādī.
MSLB	<i>The Maori School of Learning</i> , Elsdon Best.
MSLG	<i>Milḥemat ha-Shem</i> , Levi ben Gershon.
MSPP	<i>Mysticism: The Spiritual Path</i> , Lekh Raj Puri.
MSS	<i>Mīrā Sudhā Sindhu</i> .
MTGS	<i>Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism</i> , Gershom Scholem.
MTIN	<i>Mystic Treatises by Isaac of Nineveh</i> , tr. A.J. Wensinck.
MTMM	<i>Mishneh Torah</i> , Moses Maimonides.
MUM	<i>Minor Upanishads</i> , tr. Swami Madhavananda.
MUSS	<i>Muṇḍakopaniṣad</i> , tr. Swami Sarvananda.
MUSV	<i>Mahānārāyaṇopaniṣad</i> , tr. Swāmī Vimalānanda.
MVSK	<i>Mahāvvyutpatti</i> , 2 vols., ed. Sakaki.
MWPS	<i>Mantras: Words of Power</i> , Swami Sivananda Radha.
MZBS	<i>Manual of Zen Buddhism</i> , D.T. Suzuki.
NAKU	<i>Niyamasara</i> , Shri Kunda Kunda Āchārya, tr. Uggar Sain.
NARC	<i>Native American Religions</i> , Denise Carmody & John Carmody.
NDBB	<i>The Numerical Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Bhikkhu Bodhi.
NGPM	<i>Ṇaṇṣār</i> , Padmasiṃha Singh Munirāj, comm. Trilokchand Jain.
NHS20	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XX</i> , ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS21	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXI</i> , ed. Bentley Layton.
NHS31	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXXI</i> , ed. John Sieber.
NHS33	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies XXXIII</i> , ed. M. Waldstein & F. Wisse.
NHS4	<i>Nag Hammadi Studies IV</i> , ed. A. Böhlig & F. Wisse.
NMTO	<i>Ner Mitzvah ve-Torah Or</i> , Dov Baer of Lubavitch.
NSBP	<i>Noble Strategy</i> , Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
NSSS	<i>Namutthunam Sutra: Shakra Stava Sutra</i> .
NST1–2	<i>The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism</i> , 2 vols., Dudjom Rinpoche Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, tr. Gyurme Dorje & M. Kapstein.
NTA1–2	<i>New Testament Apocrypha</i> , 2 vols., E. Hennecke, tr. R.McL. Wilson, ed. W. Schneemelcher.
NUJ	<i>Nafahāt al-Uns</i> , 'Abd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, ed. Maḥdī Tawhīdīpūr.
NWNS	<i>Number Words and Number Symbols</i> , K. Menninger, tr. P. Broneer.
OCIA	<i>Les observations critiques d'Isaac d'Acco (?) sur les ouvrages de Juda ben Nissim Ibn Malka</i> , tr. George Vajda.
OCM	<i>The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition From Plato to Denys</i> , A. Louth.
ODB	<i>Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism</i> , Damien Keown.
OG	<i>The Other Gospels</i> , ed. R. Cameron.
OGL1–13	<i>Oẓar ha-Geonim</i> , 13 vols., ed. Benjamin Lewin.
OKGS	<i>Origins of the Kabbalah</i> , Gershom Scholem, tr. Allan Arkush.
OPJ	<i>On the Prayer of Jesus</i> , Ignatius Brianchaninov, tr. Father Lazarus Moore (2006 edn.).
OSD	<i>The Odes of Solomon</i> , John Davidson.

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- P1– Numbered manuscripts discovered at Dūnhuáng (China), now in the Pelliot Collection at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris (Chinese).
- PA1–7 *Plotinus*, 7 vols., tr. A.H. Armstrong.
- PAC1–2 *The Philosophers*, 2 parts, T.A. Richman.
- PAGH *The Paradoxical Ascent to God*, Rachel Elior, tr. Jeffrey Green.
- PAS *8 Chapters on Perfection & Angels' Song*, Walter Hilton, tr. Rosemary Dorward.
- PBCK *Acarya Kundakunda's Pañcāstikāya-Sāra*, A.C. Nayanar.
- PBD *Buddhist Dictionary*, Ven. Nyanatiloka.
- PBST *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, tr. D. Ben-Amos & J. Mintz.
- PCAH *Plato: Charmides, Alcibiades 1 & 2, Hipparchus, The Lovers, Theages, Minos, Epinomis*, tr. W.R.M. Lamb.
- PCT1–5 *The Philokalia*, 4 vols., tr. G.E.H. Palmer, P. Sherrard & K. Ware.
- PCW1–10 *Philo*, 10 vols., tr. F.H. Colson & G.H. Whitaker.
- PDB *The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, R. Buswell & D. Lopez.
- PDHD *Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying*, Sangye Khadro.
- PEA *Plato: Euthyphro, Apology, Crito, Phaedo, Phaedrus*, tr. H.N. Fowler.
- PEC *Plotinus (The Enneads)*, tr. Stephen MacKenna.
- PES *Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, tr. F. Williams.
- PEZM *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, Raymond Firth.
- PFVM *The Path of Freedom (Vimuttimaggā) of Arahant Upatissa*, tr. N.R.M. Ehara Soma Thera & Kheminda Thera.
- PG1–161 *Patrologiae cursus completus ... Series Graeca*, 161 vols., ed. J.-P. Migne.
- PGGN *Paths and Grounds of Guhyasamaja According to Arya Nagarjuna*, Master Yangchen Gawai Lodoe, comm. Geshe Losang Tsephel, tr. Tenzin Dorjee.
- PLPM *Plato: Laches, Protagoras, Meno, Euthydemus*, tr. W.R.M. Lamb.
- PMJK *Prophecy and Maggidism in the Life and Writings of R. Joseph Karo*, Mor Altschuler.
- PMS1–5 *Philosophy of the Masters*, 5 vols., Huzur Maharaj Sawan Singh.
- PNC *A Pair of Naṣōraean Commentaries*, tr. E.S. Drower.
- PNW *The Power of the Name*, Kallistos Ware.
- PPD1–10 *The Padma Purāṇa*, 10 vols., tr. N.A. Deshpande.
- PPGL *The Practice of the Presence of God*, Joseph de Beaufort.
- PPV1–3 *The Path of Purity*, tr. Pe Maung Tin.
- PPVM *The Path of Purification*, Buddhaghosa, tr. Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli.
- PRC *Pardes Rimmonim*, Moses Cordovero.
- PS *Pistis Sophia*, tr. Violet MacDermot.
- PSB1–3 *Paltū Sāhib kī Bānī*, 3 vols.; Belvedere.
- PSGG *Pistis Sophia: A Gnostic Gospel*, G.R.S. Mead.
- PSHC *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos*, Lawrence Fine.

PSWW	<i>A Perfumed Scorpion: A Way to the Way</i> , Idries Shah.
PTSA1–6	<i>The Aṅguttara-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. R. Morris & E. Hardy.
PTSD1–3	<i>The Dīgha-nikāya</i> , 3 vols., ed. T.W. Rhys Davids & J.E. Carpenter.
PTSDA1–5	<i>The Commentary on the Dhammapada (Dhammapada Aṭṭha-kathā)</i> , 5 vols., ed. H.C. Norman & H. Smith.
PTSKP	<i>Khuddakapāṭha with Commentary</i> , ed. Helmer Smith.
PTSM1–4	<i>The Majjhima-nikāya</i> , 4 vols., ed. V. Trenckner & R. Chalmers.
PTSN	<i>Suttanipāta</i> , ed. D. Anderson & Helmer Smith.
PTSNK	<i>Nettipakaraṇa</i> , ed. E. Hardy.
PTSP1–2	<i>Paṭisambhidāmagga</i> , 2 vols., ed. A.C. Taylor.
PTSS1–6	<i>Samyutta-nikāya</i> , 6 vols., ed. L. Feer.
PTST	<i>Theragāthā and Therīgāthā</i> , ed. H. Oldenberg & R. Pischel.
PTSU	<i>Udāna</i> , ed. P. Steinthal.
PTSV	<i>The Visuddhi-Magga of Buddhaghosa</i> , ed. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.
PTSV1–5	<i>Vinaya-piṭaka</i> , 5 vols., ed. H. Oldenberg.
PTWA	<i>The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding</i> , Longchen Rabjam, tr. Richard Barron.
PU	<i>The Principal Upaniṣads</i> , tr. S. Radhakrishnan.
PUSS	<i>The Principal Upanishads</i> , tr. Sri Swami Sivananda.
QFL	<i>Quest for Light</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
QIAR	<i>Qānūn-i 'Ishq</i> , Anwar Alī Rohtakī.
RAH	<i>Refutation of All Heresies</i> , Hippolytus, tr. S.D.F. Salmond.
RAHK	<i>Rashaḥāt-i 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt</i> , Fakhr al-Dīn 'Alī ibn Ḥusayn-i Kāshifī.
RBS1–2	<i>Plato: The Republic</i> , 2 vols., tr. P. Shorey.
RCML	<i>Śrī Rāmacaritamānasa</i> , Tulasīdāsa.
RJA	<i>Rasā'il-i Jāmi'</i> , Khwājah 'Abd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. Waḥīd Dastgirdī.
RMM	<i>The Revelations of Mechthild of Magdeburg</i> , tr. L. Menzies.
RNV1–4	<i>Rasā'il Shāh Nī'matullāhī Valī</i> , 4 vols., ed. Javād Nūrbakhsh.
RQQQ	<i>Al-Risālah al-Qushayrīyah</i> , al-Qushayrī, ed. M. al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī.
RRS	<i>The Revival of Religious Sciences</i> , al-Ghazālī, tr. Bankey Behari.
RSNO	<i>The Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Order</i> , Omar Ali-Shah.
RSV	<i>The Holy Bible: The Revised Standard Version</i> .
RUHR	<i>Rama Rahasya Upanishad</i> , tr. S. Hattangadi & P.R. Ramachander.
SB1–18	<i>Śrīmad Bhāgavatam of Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana Vyāsa</i> , 18 vols., A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.
SBAT	<i>Sar Bachan: An Abstract of the Teachings of Soami Ji Maharaj</i> .
SBB	<i>Sahajobāi kī Bānī</i> , Belvedere.
SBE	<i>Sultan Bahu</i> , J.R. Puri & K.S. Khak.
SBE2	<i>The Sacred Laws of the Āryas</i> , Part I: <i>Āpastamba and Gautama</i> , tr. Georg Bühler.
SBE25	<i>The Laws of Manu</i> , tr. George Bühler.
SBE31	<i>The Zend-Avesta</i> , Part III, tr. L.H. Mills.
SBJT	<i>The Schocken Book of Jewish Mystical Testimonies</i> , Louis Jacobs.
SBNN	<i>Sūn Bù'èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù</i> , Chén Yīngníng.

SBP	<i>Sār Bachan Chhand-Band (Sār Bachan Poetry)</i> , Swāmī Shiv Dayāl Singh.
SBU	<i>Ḥaẓrat Sulṭān Bāhū</i> .
SCM1–2	“Spiritual Concepts of the Maori,” 2 parts, Elsdon Best.
SD1–2	<i>Spiritual Discourses</i> , 2 vols., Maharaj Charan Singh.
SDST	<i>Selected Poems from the Dīvānī Shamsī Tabrīz</i> , tr. R.A. Nicholson.
SEKI	<i>Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah</i> , Moshe Idel.
SG	<i>Spiritual Gems</i> , Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji.
SGR	<i>Maḥfāṭih al-Iʿjāz fī Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz-i Maḥmūd Shabistārī</i> , Shaykh Muḥammad Lāhijī, ed. Kayvān Samīʿī.
SGRV	<i>Sant Guru Ravidās Vāṇī</i> , ed. B.P. Sharmā.
SHEA	<i>Sefer Ḥaredim</i> , Rabbi Eleazar Azikri.
SIM	<i>Studies in Islamic Mysticism</i> , R.A. Nicholson.
SKHV	<i>Shāʾarei Kedushah</i> , Ḥayyim Vital; British Museum Ms. 749.
SKHZ	<i>Shāʾarei Kedushah</i> , Ḥayyim Vital; dailyzohar.com.
SKS	<i>Self-Knowledge (Atmabodha)</i> , tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
SKSM	<i>Satt Kabīr kī Shabdāvalī</i> , ed. Shri Manilal Tulsidas Mehta.
SMAS	<i>The Sayings of Muhammad</i> , comp. Abdullah Suhrawardy.
SMIK1–13	<i>The Sufi Message of Hazrat Inayat Khan</i> , 13 vols.
SMMB	<i>Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Māori</i> , Elsdon Best.
SNPM	<i>Secret Native American Pathways</i> Thomas Mails.
SOA	<i>Sufis of Andalusia</i> , tr. R.W.J. Austin.
SOB	<i>The Spread of Buddhism</i> , ed. A. Heirman & S.P. Bumbacher.
SOHI	<i>Sefer Oẓar Ḥayyim</i> , Isaac ben Samuel of Akko.
SPK	<i>The Sufi Path of Knowledge</i> , William Chittick.
SPL	<i>The Sufi Path of Love</i> , William Chittick.
SPMT	<i>The Seven Points of Mind Training</i> , Thrangu Rinpoche, tr. Maruta Stern, Erik Kunsang & Michele Martin.
SRCD	<i>The Sublime Revelation (Al-Faṭḥ ar-Rabbānī)</i> , Shaikh ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jīlānī, tr. Muhtar Holland.
SRK1–5	<i>Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita</i> , 5 vols., Mahendra Nath Gupta.
SRSS	<i>Aparokshānubhuti or Self Realization of Sri Sankaracharya</i> , tr. Swami Vimuktananda.
SSDK	<i>Sefer ha-Shorashim</i> , David Kimḥi, ed. J.H.R. Biesenthal & F. Lebrecht.
SSE1–15	<i>Sufi Symbolism: The Nurbakhsh Encyclopedia of Sufi Terminology</i> , 15 vols., Dr Javad Nurbakhsh, tr. T. Graham <i>et al</i> .
SSI1–10	<i>Sacred Songs of India</i> , 10 vols., V.K. Subramanian.
SSJV	<i>Samaṇ Suttam</i> , comp. Jinēndra Varṇī, tr. T.K. Tukul & K.K. Dixit.
SSM1–3	<i>Studies of the Spanish Mystics</i> , 3 vols., E. Allison Peers.
SSNA	<i>Self-Liberation Through Seeing with Naked Awareness</i> , tr. John Reynolds.
SSV	<i>The Siva Samhita</i> , tr. Rai Bahadur Srisa Chandra Vasu.

STHT	<i>Shōbōgenzō</i> , Eihei Dogen, tr. Hubert Nearman.
SUAR	<i>The Saṃnyāsa Upaniṣad-s</i> , tr. A.A. Ramanathan.
SVSL	<i>‘Umar ibn al-Fāriḍ</i> , tr. Th. Emil Homerin.
SYEA	<i>Sha’arei ha-Yiḥud ve-ha-Emunah</i> , Aharon Halevi Horowitz of Staroselye.
SZGS	<i>Sha’arei Zedek</i> , ed. Gershom Scholem.
T1–100	<i>Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō</i> , 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō & Watanabe Kaigokyu.
TACD	<i>The Teachings of Ajahn Chah</i> , Ajahn Chah.
TAN1–2	<i>Tadhkiratu ‘l-Awliya</i> , 2 parts, ed. R.A. Nicholson.
TAT	<i>Taşawwuf va-Adabīyāt-i Taşawwuf</i> , Y.E. Bertels, tr. Sirus Izadi.
TBKS	<i>The Taoist Body</i> , Kristofer Schipper, tr. Karen C. Duval.
TBLD	<i>The Long Discourses of the Buddha</i> , tr. Maurice Walshe.
TDK	<i>A Testament of Devotion</i> , Thomas Kelly.
TEAK	<i>The Taoist Experience: An Anthology</i> , Livia Kohn.
TGH1–3	<i>Thrice-Greatest Hermes</i> , 3 vols., G.R.S. Mead.
TGTD	<i>The Teachings of Goswami Tulsidas</i> , K.N. Upadhyaya.
TITG	“Tantric Geometry,” Devdutt Pattanaik.
TK1–10	<i>The Treasury of Knowledge</i> , 10 vols., Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Tayé, tr. Kalu Rinpoché Translation Group.
TKSQ	<i>Tuhfat al-Kirām</i> , Mīr ‘Alī Shīr Qānī’.
TLDS	<i>The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying</i> , Sogyal Rinpoche.
TLG	<i>Thesaurus Lingae Graecae: A Digital Library of Greek Literature</i> .
TLJW	“Tefillin (Phylacteries),” Louis Jacobs.
TLM1–2	<i>Thesaurus sive Liber Magnus, vulgo “Liber Adami” appellatus, opus Mandaeorum summi ponderis</i> , 2 vols., ed. J.H. Petermann.
TMMS	<i>Taoist Meditation</i> , Isabelle Robinet, tr. J.F. Pas & N.J. Girardot.
TMS	“Tapu,” Michael Shirres.
TMU	<i>Thirty Minor Upaniṣads</i> , tr. K. Narayanasvami Aiyar.
TOH1–4567	<i>A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons</i> , ed. Hakuju Ui <i>et al.</i>
TOS	<i>Tayyibat</i> , tr. Lucas White King.
TPCS	<i>The Path</i> , Maharaj Charan Singh.
TPEF	<i>Tantra: The Path of Ecstasy</i> , Georg Feuerstein.
TPEQ	<i>The Teachings and Practices of the Early Quanzhen Taoist Masters</i> , Stephen Eskildsen.
TPU	<i>Thirteen Principal Upanishads</i> , tr. R.E. Hume.
TRAK	<i>Tohunga – The Revival</i> , Samuel Timoti Robinson.
TS	<i>The Teachings of Silvanus</i> , J. Zandee.
TSAA	<i>Ṭabaqāt al-Šūfīyah</i> , Khwājah ‘Abd Allāh Anṣārī, ed. A.H. Ḥabībī.
TSH1–2	<i>Tulsī Sāhib Hāthrasvāle kī Shabdāvalī</i> , 2 vols.; Belvedere.
TSP1–6	<i>Triṣaṣṭīśālākāpuruṣacaritra</i> , 6 vols., Hemacandra, tr. H. Johnson.
TSSH	<i>Tulsi Sahib: Saint of Hathras</i> , J.R. Puri & V.K. Sethi.

TTCT	<i>Tao Te Ching: A New Translation</i> , tr. Ch'u Ta-Kao.
TTQ	<i>The Thousand and Twelve Questions</i> , E.S. Drower.
TTS	<i>The Tibetan Tripitaka</i> , 168 vols., Peking edn., ed. D.T. Suzuki.
TTW	<i>Teachings of the Tao</i> , tr. Eva Wong.
TUSS	<i>Taittirīyopaniṣad</i> , tr. Swāmī Sarvānanda.
TVW1–5	<i>The Treatise on the Great Virtue of Wisdom of Nāgārjuna</i> , 5 vols., tr. Étienne Lamotte & Gelongma Karma Migme Chödrön.
TYAI	<i>Taoist Yoga</i> , tr. Lu K'uan Yu (Charles Luk).
TYSJ	<i>Táo Yuānmíng shī jiānzhù</i> , ed. Dīng Fúbǎo.
TZC	<i>Two Zen Classics</i> , tr. K. Sekida, ed. A.V. Grimstone.
U1–4	<i>The Upanishads</i> , 4 vols., tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
UMDC	<i>The Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen</i> , Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche & Karma Chagmey Rinpoche, tr. Erik Pema Kunsang.
VCRD	<i>Vibhaṅga</i> , ed. C.A.F. Rhys Davids.
VCSM	<i>Viveka-cūḍamaṇi of Śrī Śaṅkarācārya</i> , tr. Swāmī Mādhavānanda.
VE	<i>The Vedic Experience</i> , Raimundo Panikkar.
VPW	<i>The Viṣṇu Purāṇa</i> , tr. H.H. Wilson, ed. F. Hall.
VSJ	<i>Vedāntasāra of Sadānanda Yogindra</i> , tr. Swami Nikhilananda.
VYV	<i>Vasiṣṭha's Yoga</i> , tr. Swami Venkatesananda.
WDA1–2	<i>The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite</i> , 2 vols., tr. John Parker.
WH308	<i>The Noble Eightfold Path</i> , Bhikkhu Bodhi;
WJGY	<i>The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel</i> , Dilgo Khyentse, tr. Könchog Tenzin.
WLT	<i>The Wisdom of Lao-tse</i> , tr. Lin Yutang.
WMPT	<i>Kunzang Lama'i Shelung</i> , Patrul Rinpoche, tr. Padmakara Translation Group.
WND1–2	<i>The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin</i> , 2 vols.
WPW	<i>The Way of a Pilgrim</i> , tr. R.M. French.
WRHS	<i>The World's Religions</i> , Huston Smith.
W XK1	<i>Wen Xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature</i> , vol. 1, comp. Tong Xiao, tr. David R. Knechtges.
WZ1–3	<i>The Wisdom of the Zohar</i> , 3 vols., arr. F. Lachower & I. Tishby.
XB1–23	<i>Dàozàng xùbiān</i> , 23 titles in 4 vols., ed. Mǐn Yǐdé.
YICH	<i>Yaśastilaka and Indian Culture</i> , Krishna Kanta Handiqui.
YQ1–122	<i>Yúnjí qīqiān</i> , 122 chapters, comp. Zhāng Jūnfáng.
YSHG	<i>The Yoga Shastra of Hemachandracarya</i> , tr. A.S. Gopani.
YSP1–3	<i>Yeri 'ot Shelomo</i> , 3 vols., Solomon Pappenheim.
YU	<i>The Yoga Upaniṣads</i> , tr. T.R. S'rīnivāsa Ayyaṅgār.
YVPH	<i>Yātrā-vidhi-pañcāśaka</i> , Haribhadra (Prakrit).
ZRZB	<i>Zen Ritual</i> , ed. Steven Heine & Dale S. Wright.
ZSS1–5	<i>The Zohar</i> , 5 vols., tr. Harry Sperling & Maurice Simon.
ZTML	<i>The Zen Teachings of Master Lin-Chi</i> , Burton Watson.
ZW1–991	<i>Zángwài dàoshū</i> , 991 titles in 36 vols.

8.4 RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

(SHARĪRA-DHĀTU–ZUNNĀR)

sharīra-dhātu (S), **sarīra-dhātu** (Pa), **ring bsrel** (T), **shèlì** (C), **shari** (J) *Lit.* body (*sharīra*) part (*dhātu*); relic; bodily remains left after the cremation of a holy person's body; also, material remains of sacred objects such as scriptures, bowls, robes, cuttings from the *bodhi* tree, and so on; usually housed in a shrine, a funeral mound or a stupa (S. *stūpa*, Pa. *thūpa*) and made an object of worship and pilgrimage; often referred to simply as *sharīra*. In Chinese Buddhism, there are two kinds of relics – the whole body or parts of it. Sometimes they are understood as the Buddha's physical remains (or relics) and the *sūtras*, which are regarded as his spiritual remains.

It is believed that *sharīra-dhātus* have been left by a large number of *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and *arhats*. The most significant relics are those of the Buddha – the tooth relic housed in the *Sri Dalada Maligawa* ('Temple of the Tooth') in the city of Kandy, Sri Lanka, being the most celebrated. After the death and cremation of the body of an enlightened being, the incombustible remains (bones, teeth, ashes, and other solids) are regarded as sacred relics. These sacred remains are then housed in shrines and stupas, often associated with temples and monasteries, and become objects of veneration, worship, and pilgrimage. In the commentaries to the Pali *suttas*, it is said that stupas were built to house the relics of devoted disciples of the Buddha, as in the cases of the Venerable Sāriputta and Mahā Moggallāna.¹

The tradition of erecting stupas and shrines to house the relics is mentioned in several *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna sūtras*. According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,² when the ailing Buddha realizes that his end is close, he goes with his disciple Ānanda to a grove of flowering *shāla* trees, "though it was not the flowering season". Lying down upon the ground,

the blossoms rained upon the body of the Tathāgata, and dropped and scattered, and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathāgata. And celestial *mandāra* flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder from the sky rained down upon the body of the Tathāgata, and dropped and scattered, and were strewn upon it in worship of the Tathāgata. And the sound of heavenly voices and heavenly instruments made music in the air out of reverence for the Tathāgata.

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTS22 p.138, DNVS

The Buddha, however, is not impressed. He remarks that it is those who follow his teaching (*Dhamma*) and make an effort on the spiritual path that truly honour him:

It is not in this manner, Ānanda, that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. But, Ānanda, whatever *bhikkhu* (monk) or *bhikkhuni* (nun), layman or

laywoman, abides by the *Dhamma*, lives uprightly in the *Dhamma* and walks in the way of the *Dhamma*, it is by such a one that the Tathāgata is respected, venerated, esteemed, worshipped, and honoured in the highest degree. Therefore, Ānanda, thus should you train yourselves: “We shall abide by the *Dhamma*, live uprightly in the *Dhamma*, and walk in the way of the *Dhamma*.” . . .

Do not limit yourselves, Ānanda, by honouring the body of the Tathāgata. Rather you should strive, Ānanda, and be zealous on your own behalf, for your own good. Unflinchingly, ardently and resolutely you should apply yourselves to your own good.

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.139; cf. DNVS

Nevertheless, the *sutta* also explains that “There are four places that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence” – the places of the Buddha’s birth, enlightenment, where he started his teachings, and his death (*parinibbāna*):

And truly there will come to these places, Ānanda, pious *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunis*, laymen and laywomen, reflecting: “Here the Tathāgata was born! Here the Tathāgata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme enlightenment! Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of the *Dhamma*! Here the Tathāgata passed away into the state of *nibbāna* in which no element of clinging remains!” And whoever should die on such a pilgrimage with his heart established in faith, at the breaking up of the body after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness (*saggaḷoka*).

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 pp.140–41, DNVS

And the Buddha adds that there are plenty of “wise nobles, wise *brāhmaṇas* and wise householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata, and it is they who will render honour to the body of the Tathāgata”. He then gives some detailed instructions concerning the rather complex manner in which he should be cremated (like a *cakkavattin*, a universal monarch), and that a stupa should subsequently be erected at a crossroads:

The body of a universal monarch (*cakkavattin*), Ānanda, is first wrapped round with new linen, and then with teased cotton wool, and so it is done up to five hundred layers of linen and five hundred of cotton wool. When that is done, the body of the universal monarch is placed in an iron oil vessel, which is enclosed in another iron vessel, a funeral pyre is built of all kinds of perfumed woods, and so the body of the universal monarch is burned; and at a crossroads, a stupa (*thūpa*) is raised for the universal monarch. So it is done, Ānanda,

with the body of a universal monarch. And even, Ānanda, as with the body of a universal monarch, so should it be done with the body of the Tathāgata; and at a crossroads also a stupa (*thūpa*) should be raised for the Tathāgata. And whosoever shall bring to that place garlands or incense or sandalwood paste, or pay reverence, and whose mind becomes calm there – it will be to his well-being and happiness for a long time.

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 pp.141–42; cf. DNVS

He then explains that four kinds of people are worthy of a stupa – a *tathāgata*, a *pacceka-buddha* (a non-teaching *buddha* who attains enlightenment for himself alone), a disciple of a Tathāgata, and a *cakkavattin*. And he explains why stupas are helpful to people:

And why, Ānanda, is a *tathāgata*, an *arahanta*, a fully enlightened one worthy of a stupa? Because, Ānanda, at the thought: “This is the stupa (*thūpa*) of that blessed one, *arahanta*, fully enlightened one!” the hearts of many people will be calmed and made happy; and so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness. And so also at the thought: “This is the stupa (*thūpa*) of that *pacceka-buddha*!” or “This is the stupa (*thūpa*) of a disciple of that *tathāgata*, *arahanta*, fully enlightened one!” or “This is the stupa (*thūpa*) of that righteous monarch who ruled according to *Dhamma*!” – the hearts of many are calmed and made happy; and so calmed and with their minds established in faith therein, at the breaking up of the body after death, they will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness (*sagga-loka*). And it is because of this, Ānanda, that these four persons are worthy of a stupa (*thūpa*).

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 pp.142–43; cf. DNVS

But all the talk of the Buddha’s immanent departure is too much for Ānanda, who withdraws to a quiet place and weeps, saying:

I am still but a learner, and still have to strive for my own perfection. But, alas, my master, who was so compassionate towards me, is about to pass away!

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.143; cf. DNVS

Asking a disciple to bring Ānanda to him, the Buddha then tells him:

Enough, Ānanda! Do not grieve, do not lament! For have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there

must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, compounded, and subject to decay, how can one say: “May it not come to dissolution!”? There can be no such state of things. Now for a long time, Ānanda, you have served the Tathāgata with lovingkindness in deed, word and thought, graciously, pleasantly, with a whole heart and beyond measure. Great good have you gathered, Ānanda! Now you should make an effort, and soon you too will be free from the impurities (*āsava*).

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.144; cf. DNVS

The Buddha’s passing is then described, as he rises from *jhāna* to *jhāna* (stages of meditative absorption) and finally into the ultimate *nibbāna*. At this, there is thunder and an earthquake, and various high deities and close disciples say something appropriate, and many of those present, including deities, cry out:

Too soon has the Blessed One come to his *parinibbāna*! Too soon has the Happy One come to his *parinibbāna*! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished from sight!

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 pp.157–58; cf. DNVS

After the Buddha’s passing, the Mallas of Kushinārā, the local ruling clan, and their families, who had come to pay their last respects to the Buddha and to cremate his body,

with dance, song, music, flower garlands, and perfume, and erecting canopies and pavilions, spent the day showing respect, honour, and veneration to the body of the Blessed One. And then the thought came to them: “Now the day is too far spent for us to cremate the body of the Blessed One. Tomorrow we will do it.”

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.159; cf. DNVS

This goes on for six days, until on the seventh they decide that it is time for them to cremate the body. Having conducted the cremation according to the Buddha’s earlier instructions, they take the relics to their council hall, and honour them as they had previously honoured the Buddha’s body. At this point, representatives of seven other ruling clans arrive with a claim to a portion of the relics; but the Mallas of Kushinārā decline to part with any of them. The situation is resolved, however, when the *brāhmaṇ* Doṇa suggests that their conduct is unseemly in the face of the Buddha’s teaching of tolerance and forbearance, and they accept Doṇa’s proposal of an eight-way split. Doṇa then asks for the urn, over which he intends to erect a stupa. At this point, another ruling family who has just arrived requests a portion of the relics and

on learning that there are no portions left, settles for the ashes. Each of the ruling clans then erect a stupa over their portion of the relics, plus “a ninth for the urn, and a tenth for the ashes. And thus it was in the days of old.”³

The Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* is the oldest variant of the legend concerning the death of the Buddha, and forms the basis of many later elaborations. How much is fact, and how much is the kind of hagiographic accretion that embellishes the life stories and deaths of many of the world’s holy men and women is uncertain. Some aspects may have been intended symbolically or have been added out of a sense of reverence. But the Buddha’s instruction to Ānanda to focus on the *Dhamma*, on the spiritual path, seems entirely worthy of such a great spiritual personage. Many of the other details could easily have been added later as a justification for practices that had sprung up after the Buddha’s death. This would include the ‘significance’ of relics.

It is also unlikely that there is any historical basis for the Buddhist tradition of a ‘war of the relics’, whose earliest ‘mention’ is probably as two huge stone friezes straddling the western and southern gateways of the Great Stupa of Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh. According to legend, the great Emperor Ashoka (304–232 BCE), who ruled over much of the Indian subcontinent for around thirty-five years, collected all the relics, opened the reliquaries, and redistributed them around his kingdom in 84,000 stupas. After a fierce and bloody war against the state of Kalinga (now Orissa) in which 100,000 died and even more were deported, Ashoka gradually converted to Buddhism, later becoming one of its greatest advocates.

A good example of the elaboration of the original story is found in the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, a mostly Chinese creation, which maintains that the “tenth great work of a *buddha*” includes permitting the (*post-mortem*) dismembering of his body in order to make countless relics and stupas that serve to remind people of his teachings:

In order to transform and liberate all heavenly and celestial beings (*nāgas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *etc.*) . . . human and non-human, they permit the dismembering of their own bodies into innumerable relics (*shèlì*) . . . in order to inculcate purity and faith in the minds of sentient beings, so that they may honour, respect and joyfully worship the *buddha*, and cultivate all virtues in order to reach the journey’s end.

And in the dwelling places of heavenly and celestial beings (*nāgas*, *yakshas*, *gandharvas*, *etc.*) . . . of human and non-human beings, they build monuments, adorned in various ways, for the purpose of worship. Their teeth, nails and hair are all used to build monuments, so that all those who see them may remember the Buddha, the *Dharma* (C. *fǎ*) and the community (C. *sēng*, S. *sangha*), honouring and reverencing them in order to help them to maintain their conviction in the faith with joy, to give alms and service wherever they may be, and to cultivate

the virtues; and so that, through the merit thus earned, they may take birth in the heavens or as a human being, amid kinsfolk of nobility and prosperity, having abundant property and a pure household; and so that they do not enter evil incarnations, but always dwell in good incarnations, where they can always see the *buddha* and live in a pure manner; and so that they can rapidly attain liberation from the three realms of existence, and follow the vehicle (path) of their own aspiration and reap its corresponding fruit. Recognizing the grace of the *tathāgata* (C. *rúlái*), they repay with gratitude the favours they have received, dedicating themselves forever to the *buddhas* of the world. . . .

Although the *buddhas* and world-honoured ones have died (entered *parinirvāṇa*), they still remain as fields of blessings for sentient beings – inconceivable, pure, boundless, virtuous, and without equal. They cause the roots of goodness and virtue of sentient beings to reach fulfilment. This is the tenth great work of a *buddha*.

Avataṃsaka Sūtra 47, T10 279:248a24–b12

See also: **tīrtha**.

1. Compiled from commentaries on *Samyutta Nikāya* 47:13–14, *Cunda Sutta*, PTS55 pp.161–63; in *Life of Sāriputta*, LSNT.
2. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.72–168.
3. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.159–67, DNVS.

shaṭ-karma (S), **khaṭ karma** (H/Pu) *Lit.* six (*shash*, *khaṭ*) observances (*karma*); the six duties or rituals enjoined on a *brāhmaṇ*, according to Hindu scriptures; also called the *shaṭ-kriyā*. Various lists of the *shaṭ-karma* appear in the different sacred books, and according to different commentators. The *Parāshara Smṛiti* lists them as:¹

1. *Samdhyā*. Prayer at twilight (*samdhya*), at dawn and dusk.
2. *Snāna*. Religious ablutions (*snāna*) and lustrations; bathing in sacred waters.
3. *Japa*. Recitation (*japa*) of sacred texts.
4. *Homa*. Fire sacrifice (*homa*) or offering.
5. *Deva pūjā*. Worship (*pūjā*) of the gods (*deva*).
6. *Vishva-devātithi*. Treating guests (*atithi*) as though they were gods.

There are variations on the theme, and some later *smṛitis*, in place of one or other of the above, include:

1. Veda-pāṭha. Recitation (pāṭha) of the Vedas.
2. Brahmayajña. Worship (yajña) of God.

3. *Tarpaṇa*. Satisfaction, pleasing or propitiation (*tarpaṇa*) of the gods, sages, and ancestors through offerings of water.

The six traditional duties or observances mentioned individually throughout the Hindu *smṛitis* are often listed as:

1. *Japa*. Recitation.
2. *Tapas*. Austerities.
3. *Tīrthayātrā*. Pilgrimage; journey (*yātrā*) to holy places (*tīrtha*), especially on the banks of streams or lakes.
4. *Deva pūjā*. Worship (*pūjā*) of the gods (*deva*).
5. *Mantra-sādhana*. The practice (*sādhana*) of *mantras* (verbal formulae), worship by means of *mantras*.
6. *Samnyāsa*. Renunciation.

Traditionally, the six duties that *brāhmaṇs* are expected to perform are:

1. *Adhyayana*. Studying (*adhyayana*) or recitation of the *Vedas*.
2. *Adhyāpana*. Teaching (*adhyāpana*) the *Vedas*.
3. *Yajña*. Offering sacrifices (*yajña*).
4. *Yājana*. Performing sacrifices for others.
5. *Dāna*. Giving (*dāna*) gifts to others, charity, almsgiving.
6. *Pratigraha*. Receiving (*pratigraha*) gifts from others.

Other lists detail the first two as acquiring knowledge (*jñāna*) and imparting it to others.

In yogic practice, the *shaṭ-karmas* are listed as:²

1. *Dhauti*. Cleansing the stomach by swallowing and withdrawing a long piece of cloth.
2. *Vasti*. A yogic form of enema.
3. *Netī*. Cleansing the nasal passage by pulling a thread through the nose and mouth.
4. *Naulī*. Churning, and thereby cleansing, the stomach and intestines by rhythmic rolling of the abdominal muscles.
5. *Trāṭaka*. Gazing steadily at an object; fixing the attention on an object.
6. *Kapāla-bhāti*. Skull (*kapāla*) lustre (*bhāti*); cleansing of the passage between the mouth and nostrils, by drawing in either air or water.

Tantric texts understand the *shaṭ-karmas* or *shaṭ-karaṇas* as rites in which the incantation of *mantras* plays a central part. They are generally listed as:³

1. *Shānti-karaṇa*. Propitiating, pacifying; a rite intended to remove obstacles, avert evil, and create peace (*shānti*) in one's environment; includes exorcism.

2. *Vashī-karaṇa*. Subjugating, subduing; the power to subject someone to one's will by means of charms and incantations.
3. *Stambhana*. Driving away; the power to block negative influences.
4. *Vidveshaṇa*. Causing enmity; the power to stir up misunderstandings, quarrels and enmity between people.
5. *Uchchāṭana*. Uprooting; a rite intended to make someone leave something, such as their home or job, by making them feel uncomfortable in that situation.
6. *Marāṇa*. Death; the incantation of a *mantra* with the intention of causing another's death, either rapidly or slowly, often by invoking evil powers; generally understood to be used only in self-defence.

In Jainism, some *Digambara* teachers,⁴ such as the ninth-century Jinasena, prescribe six *karmas* or *karmans* for the laity, as a replacement for the more stringent, six *āvashyakas* recommended for mendicant monks. Three of these (*deva pūjā*, *tapas*, *dāna*) are found among the Hindu lists.

As the sole means to salvation, Indian *sants* are not impressed by any of these methods:

People may recite by heart
 the *Shāstras*, the *Smṛitis*, and the four *Vedas*;
 They may be ascetics or great self-disciplined *yogīs*;
 They may visit sacred shrines of pilgrimage (*tirath*)
 and perform the *khaṭ karmas* (observances), over and over again,
 performing worship services (*pūjā*) and ritual bathings (*nāi*) –
 Even so, if they have not embraced love for the supreme Lord God,
 then they shall surely go to hell.

Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 70, AGK

You perform the *khaṭ karma*,
 and sit (in yogic postures, *āsan*) wearing your loincloth (*dhoti*).
 In the homes of the wealthy,
 you read the prayer book (*pothī*).
 You chant on your rosary (*mālā*),
 and beg for money.
 No one has ever been saved in this way, friend.

Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 888, AGK

He may remain devoted to worship (*pūjā*) and adoration (*archā*),
 bowing his forehead to the floor practising the *khaṭ karma*.
 He indulges in egotism and pride, and falls into entanglements,
 but he does not meet the Lord by these devices.

Guru Arjun, *Ādi Granth* 642, AGK

See also: **haṭha yoga** (8.5), **karma-kāṇḍa**.

1. *Parāshara Smṛiti* 1:39.
2. E.g. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 1:12, *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 2:22–36, *HYPM* pp.186–224.
3. E.g. *Yoginī Tantra* 4.
4. Jinasena, *Ādi Purāṇa* 38:34, *APJJ*; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, *CSCM* p.21; both in *JYMS* p.185.

Shavu'ot (He) *Lit.* weeks; the Feast of Weeks; the Jewish festival of Pentecost, which falls on the fiftieth day after the start of the *Pesaḥ* (Passover) festival; commemorates the revelation of the *Torah* (the five books of the *Pentateuch*) on Mt Sinai in about 1300 BCE;¹ also celebrates the spring wheat harvest.

Observance of the Feast of Weeks is commanded in *Exodus*:

You shall observe the Feast of Weeks (*Shavu'ot*), the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering (*Ḥag ha-Asiph*) at the year's end.

Exodus 34:22; cf. KJV

Details of the various festivals to be observed in the Jewish calendar are stipulated in *Leviticus*. Regarding the celebration of *Shavu'ot*, *Leviticus* instructs:

From the day after the Sabbath (of Passover), . . . you must count seven full weeks. You must count fifty days, to the day after the Sabbath, and then you must offer *Yahweh* a new oblation. You must bring bread from your homes to present with the gesture of offering – two loaves, made of two-tenths of wheaten flour baked with leaven; these are first fruits for *Yahweh*. In addition to the bread, you must offer seven one-year-old, unblemished lambs, a young bull and two rams, as a burnt offering to *Yahweh* with a cereal offering and a libation, as food burnt as a smell pleasing to *Yahweh*.

You must also offer a goat as a sacrifice for sin, and two one-year-old lambs as a communion sacrifice. The priest must present them before *Yahweh* with the gesture of offering, in addition to the bread of the first fruits. These, and the two lambs, are holy things for *Yahweh*, and will revert to the priest.

On the same day, you are to hold an assembly; this is to be a sacred assembly for you; you must do no heavy work. This is a perpetual law for all future generations, wherever you may be living.

When you gather the harvest in your land, you must not harvest to the very edges of your field, and you must not gather the gleanings of the harvest. You must leave them for the poor and for the stranger.

Leviticus 23:15–22; cf. JB, KJV

See also: **Pesah**.

1. *Exodus* 19:6–24:18.

shèngdì (C) *Lit.* divine or sacred (*shèng*) ground or place (*dì*); shrine, holy land, holy city; the ground on which Daoist temples are established; places believed to be inhabited by spirits, divine beings, or sages.

In ancient times, shamans (*wū*) and Daoist adepts (*nèiháng*) led solitary lives in places where they could enjoy the spiritual atmosphere of the space around them. Such places were either already considered sacred or became so by virtue of the adepts' presence. Mountains (*shān*) and caverns or grottos (*dòng*), with their symbolic flow of the 'blood' of water and the 'breath' of air, were traditionally regarded as sites where the spiritual penetrated the physical; they thus became sacred spaces for Daoist practitioners. Over time, legends developed around these mountains and grotto heavens, and accounts of their holiness entered the written tradition.

All major schools of Daoism are associated with at least one sacred place – frequently a mountain, whose grandeur, beauty and physical loftiness evoke the spiritual aspiration of the practitioners. Tàishān, one of China's most sacred mountains – the sacred mountain in the East – has a 'Stairway to Heaven' comprising about 7,000 steps leading to the top of the mountain. The stairway is lined with small temples of various deities – the temple at the top being dedicated to *Yùdì* (the Jade Emperor), the highest deity, who presides over heaven and earth.

The five great sacred mountains (*wǔyuè*) of Daoism are:

Tàishān ('Tranquil Mountain') in the East (Shāndōng).

Huàshān ('Splendid Mountain') in the West (Shānxī).

Héngshān ('Balancing Mountain') in the South (Húnán).

Héngshān ('Permanent Mountain') in the North (Shānxī).

Sōngshān ('Lofty Mountain') in the centre of China (Hénán).

There is a widespread belief that the lords of these five sacred mountains (*wǔyuè dìzūn*) are also the keepers of the entrances to the netherworld, located deep within the mountains.

Certain caves, caverns and mountain hollows, known as *dòngtiān* (grotto heavens) are considered conducive to spiritual growth. There are hundreds of them all over China, with each Daoist community having access to at least one. Many include underground networks connecting various sacred locations, with temples (*miào*) constructed above them.

Gazettes (*bǎojiàn*, 'precious scrolls'), which list sacred and auspicious spaces in Daoism and explain their historical significance, are considered sacred in themselves. Geomancy and divination were used, together with

legends and personal accounts, to determine their location. The findings, with short explanations of their whereabouts, were recorded in manuals such as the *Kānyú mìjǐ bǎojiàn* ('Precious Scroll Containing Secret Tablets on Heaven and Earth'). Such compilations are still produced today, with the modern versions including tourist information.

shikhā (S/H/Pu), **sikh** (Pu) *Lit.* a tuft of hair on the crown of the head; a crest, a topknot, a plume; an external symbol of *brāhmaṇs* and some groups of *sādhus* and *sannyāsins* (mendicant holy men).

Mystics have generally observed that outward symbols bear no relation-ship to inner spiritual attainment. Thus, the *Varāha Upanishad* describes the creation as being comprised of ninety-six *tattvas* (essences), adding that he who has inner experience of these *tattvas* will attain liberation of the soul, whatever his religious affiliation:

Those that know these ninety-six *tattvas* will attain salvation in what-ever order of life they may be, whether they have matted hair, or are of shaven head, or have only a tuft (*shikhā*) of hair.

Varāha Upanishad 1:17; cf. TMU p.168

A true holy man, detached from the entire world, has no concern for any outward symbol. "Knowledge", here, refers to mystical awareness, consciousness, or gnosis:

The *paramahansa* carries neither the staff (*daṇḍa*), nor the hair-tuft (*shikhā*), nor the holy thread (*yajñopavīta*), nor any covering. He feels neither cold nor heat, neither happiness nor misery, neither honour nor dishonour, *etc.* It is meet that he should be beyond the reach of the six billows (hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, disease, and death) of this world-ocean. Having given up all thought of calumny, conceit, jealousy, ostentation, arrogance, attachment or antipathy to objects, joy and sorrow, lust, anger, covetousness, self-delusion, elation, envy, egoism and the like, he regards his body as a corpse, as he has thoroughly destroyed the body-idea.

Being eternally free from the cause of doubt and of misconceived and false knowledge, realizing the eternal *Brahman*, he lives in That himself with the consciousness, "I myself am He; I am That which is ever calm, immutable, undivided, of the essence of knowledge-bliss (*ānanda-vijñāna*); That alone is my real nature." That alone is his tuft of hair (*shikhā*). That alone is his holy thread (*pavitra*). Through the knowledge of the unity of the *jīvātman* with the *Paramātman*, the distinction between them is wholly gone.

Paramahansa Upanishad 2; cf. MUM pp.4-5

He who has knowledge of the non-dual *Ātman* (Self) has the real sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*). His deep absorption in meditation is itself the tuft (*shikhā*). . . . He is deeply absorbed in *Brahman*; he is the illumined being (*deva*); he is the sage; he practises penance; he is the noblest; he is greater than all.

Paramahansa-parivrājaka Upanishad 5; cf. SUAR p.160

Guru Nānak also points out that external symbols are no indication of the inner spiritual condition:

Some shave their heads,
 some keep matted locks;
 Some wear hair tufts (*jaṭā sikh*),
 and some observe silence, yet full of pride.
 Without loving devotion and divine knowledge,
 their mind wavers and wanders in ten directions.
 Maddened by *māyā* (illusion), man abandons the nectar (*amrit*)
 and drinks the deadly poison.
 Thus his evil deeds (*kirat*) are not effaced.
 He realizes not the Lord's will (*hukam*)
 and enters into the bodies of beasts.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1013, AGC

Likewise, the Jain teacher Mahāvīra (C6th BCE) writes:

A person may have a tuft (*shikhā*)
 or matted hair on the head,
 or a shaven head, or remain naked, or wear but a rag.
 But if he tells a lie, it is all fruitless and futile.

Āchārya Shivārya, Bhagavati Ārāadhanā 843

See also: **sannyāsin** (7.1), **upanayana**.

shirk (A/P) *Lit.* association; polytheism, idolatry, infidelity, pluralism; ascribing an associate or partner to God; depicting God as being like anything in His creation; hence, all religions other than Islam, as well as atheism (putting nothingness in place of God); related to the terms *sharīk* (partner) and *mushrik* (associator, unbeliever, idolator, pagan); regarded as the converse of *tawhīd* (unity), the profession of God's unity. The *Qur'ān* is emphatic that God has no partner or associate:

He to whom belongs the dominion
 of the heavens and the earth:

No son has He begotten,
 nor has He a partner (*sharīk*) in His dominion.
 It is He who created all things,
 and ordered them in due proportions.

Qur'ān 25:2, AYA

One day we shall gather them all together.
 We shall say to those who ascribe partners (*shurakā'*) to us:
 "Where are the partners (*shurakā'*) of your make-believe?"

Qur'ān 6:22; cf. AYA, MGK

Associating no "partner" with God is first among many good human qualities:

Serve God, and associate no partners (*tushrikū*) with Him;
 And do good to parents, kinsfolk, orphans, those in need,
 neighbours who are near, neighbours who are strangers,
 the companion by your side, the wayfarer,
 and what your right hands possess.
 For God loves not the arrogant, the vainglorious.

Qur'ān 4:36; cf. AYA

To associate partners with God is the only sin that He does not forgive:

God does not forgive the associating (*yushraka*)
 of other gods with Him,
 but, other than that, He forgives whoever He pleases.
 Whoever associates (*yushrik*) other gods with God
 has strayed far, far away. . . .
 To set up partners (*yushraka*) with God
 is to be guilty of a heinous sin.

Qur'ān 4:116, 48; cf. AYA

In Sufism, the "partners" or "other gods" are human imperfections, which draw the attention that should otherwise be engaged in worship. Giving the attention to anything other than God is polytheism:

If our hearts are engaged in anything,
 then we are engaged in polytheism (*shirk*).

Aṭṭār, Dīvān 568:8025, DASN p.423, in SSE3 p.41

In traditional Islam, the sin of *shirk* is considered to have been avoided so long as a person has pronounced the *shahādah*, "There is no god but God." Verbal affirmations, however, do not necessarily reflect either internal belief or individual experience:

A disciple asked Junayd,
 “O you who are steeped in the mysteries,
 tell me, who is a polytheist (*mushrik*)?”
 Junayd replied, “O idle prattler,
 whoever speaks God’s name without having seen Him
 is a polytheist (*mushrik*) and a perverse meddler!”

‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān, Qaṣā’id 16:840–42, DASN p.52, in SSE3 p.42

Likewise, Shaykh Shiblī says in his characteristically outspoken way that Sufism itself, the spiritual path, is all *shirk*, because the seeker is striving to overcome something that he regards as real and as something other than God:

Abū Bakr Shiblī says: “Sufism is polytheism (*shirk*), because it is the guarding of the heart from the vision of ‘other’, and ‘other’ does not exist.” That is to say, vision of other (than God) in affirming the unity of God is polytheism (*shirk*), and when ‘other’ has no value in the heart, it is absurd to guard the heart from remembrance of ‘other’.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb III, KMM p.43, KM p.38

Shirk is said to be of two kinds: *jalī* (apparent) and *khafī* (latent, hidden, secret). *Shirk-i jalī* is the open belief that God has partners (*sharīk*). *Shirk-i khafī* refers to all forms of attachment to anything other than God, *i.e.* material things, spiritual stations on the way to God, and especially the individual self. Ibn al-Fāriḍ says that anyone who harbours a hidden sense of self is subject to hidden *shirk* and will consequently experience the pain of “separation”:

If you but knew it,
 you are devoted to secret polytheism (*shirk al-khafī*),
 with a soul that has strayed from the guidance of the Truth.
 He in whose love union with his Beloved
 has not been accomplished falls by his polytheism (*shirk*)
 into the fire of separation from his Beloved.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā’rīyah 227–28, DFQM p.68; cf. in SIM p.220

Shaykh Bahā’ī says that it is love that frees the seeker from the subtle forms of *shirk*:

Hear this from me: knowledge that gives new life is the knowledge of love. This knowledge will transport you along a way that will free you from latent (*khafī*) and apparent (*jalī*) polytheism (*shirk*).

Shaykh Bahā’ī, Kullīyāt, Shīr-u Shakar, KSBA pp.32–33; cf. in SSE3 p.42

Some Sufis have also spoken of *shirk al-akhaṭī* (most hidden polytheism) as the subtlest level of *shirk al-khaṭī*. Any awareness of self as separate from God is *shirk al-akhaṭī*. In this sense, only the perfect saint is completely free from *shirk*.

See also: **but**, **ṣanam**.

shǒuguò (C) *Lit.* admitting a fault or one's mistakes. See **chéngfù**.

shōulù (C) *Lit.* to receive, to accept (*shōu*) a register (*lù*); in Daoism, to receive a *lù* (register). A practitioner receives a *lù* at the time of his initiation or ordination. This *lù* is a list of protective deities over whom the owner is said to wield some control, for which reason he always has it with him. The *lù* is also seen as a form of diploma for having attained that particular level of initiation or ordination. The length of the register (*i.e.* list of deities) increases with the adept's progress through the various levels of ordination. The adept calls upon the deities to effect healing, to convey petitions to the other world, and for self-protection. In a form of contractual arrangement with both the master who imparted the *lù* and with the deities listed therein, the possessor of the *lù* agrees to observe certain precepts.

When imparting a *lù*, a *fú* (talisman) is also bestowed, for which reason the ritual is generally known as 'imparting talismans and registers'. The term *shōulù* is used to describe both the imparting and receiving of the register. By extension, *shōulù* also refers to the acceptance of someone as a Daoist priest, and to the acceptance of a disciple by a master.

See also: **fú**, **lù**.

shrāddha (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* faithful; a rite in which an offering of food and drink is made to deceased relatives and ancestors; a religious ceremony accompanied by a feast for *brāhmaṇs* and others, generally performed by a son of the deceased for the welfare of a departed one a few days after death, and subsequently half-yearly or yearly thereafter; also performed by those who wish to renounce the world.

When performed a short time after death, a *shrāddha* is known as an *ekōddishṭa*, and is considered of great help to the departed. Up to that time, the deceased is thought to be a wandering spirit in an ethereal body, and the *ekōddishṭa* helps the spirit enter the world of the ancestors (*pitṛiloka*). The *ekōddishṭa* rite consists of a water offering, sometimes with the addition of rice balls intended to sustain the departed spirit.

Mystics have often pointed out the illogical nature of such rites. The Indian mystic Paltū observes that, while alive, parents are uncared for and given hardly anything to eat. Yet after death, the son goes to a holy place to feed the *brāhmaṇs* and wastes good food by throwing it into a holy river:

No food is given to aged parents when they live,
 but when dead, it is offered to their spirits.
 How can the dead eat such food?
 If a dead bull is given grass, how can he eat it?
 A neighbouring lady comes and prepares delicious food,
 which the sons and relatives greatly relish,
 while the parents are offered libation of water
 and an oblation of rice balls!
 Nothing actually reaches the dead parents,
 yet the sons think that they gain great merit
 for their respectful gesture.
 These ignorant idiots treat dead parents as ghosts.
 Paltū says that this rite is practised by them,
 ostensibly for the salvation of their parents;
 But, it is mere show and deception.
 No food is given to aged parents when they are living,
 but when they are dead it is offered to their spirits.

Paltū, Bānī 1, Kuṇḍālī 191, PSB1 p.80

See also: **pitṛipūjā, shraddhā** (►4).

Shugendō (J) *Lit.* way (*dō*) of cultivating (*shu*) miraculous power (*gen*); path of acquiring supernatural powers; an esoteric (*mikkyō*), ascetic and layman's path that has merged native Japanese folk beliefs with elements of *Shintō*, Daoism and various Buddhist schools, especially the esoteric (tantric) *Tendai* and *Shingon* traditions. *Shugendō* practitioners are called *yamabushi* (one who reposes in the mountains, a mountain man), *shugenja* (one who cultivates miraculous power), *shugyō sha*, *kenja* (wise man), and *kenza*.

The central distinguishing feature of *Shugendō* is the practice of long and difficult pilgrimages through the sacred landscapes of mountainous areas. Other *Shugendō* austerities and esoteric practices include immersion in waterfalls, solitary existence in caves, various fasting regimes, meditation, long sessions of chanting sacred texts, prayer, recitation of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs* (spells), the use of *maṇḍalas* (especially in the interpretation of mountain terrain as a *maṇḍala*), charms (amulets *etc.*), exorcism and control of evil spirits, fire ceremonies, initiation and consecration ceremonies, and so on. The goal is a fusion of the quest for spiritual enlightenment in the present life, the desire to

acquire merit for the benefit of others, and the development of supernatural and healing powers. Enlightenment is understood as attaining union with the *kami* (*Shintō* mountain deities) or with the primary *Shugendō* deity, *Fudō Myōō*.

Buddhist doctrines such as the six *pāramitās* (perfections) and the ten *dharma* realms of existence – hell, hungry ghosts, animals, demons, humans, deities, *shrāvakas* (disciples), *pratyeka-buddhas* (privately enlightened buddhas), *bodhisattvas*, *buddhas* – have been incorporated into *Shugendō*, but interpreted as physical and spiritual stages traversed by the ascetics in the course of their mountain pilgrimages. Buddhist *maṇḍalas*, especially the *taizōkai* (womb world) and *kongōkai* (diamond world) *maṇḍalas*, normally understood as symbolic representations of the various celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and their various forms of wisdom, are reinterpreted as symbolic maps of sacred mountain landscapes. Thus, the mountains come to be identified with the celestial *buddha* Vairocana (J. Dainichi), the primal cosmic *buddha* who pervades all and is the source of all; and entering the mountains is understood to be entering the *maṇḍala* of Vairocana, and becoming an integral part of him. Undertaking a pilgrimage is to enter the *maṇḍala* associated with that particular mountain range, with particular features on the route – waterfalls, springs, large boulders, and so on – being regarded as the residence of the particular deities represented in the *maṇḍala*. Many of Buddhism's celestial beings have also been incorporated into *Shugendō* worship, with the addition of various new deities. Identification with *Fudō Myōō* through suitable rituals permits entry to the spiritual realm and control of his retinue of servants for the purposes of exorcizing the evil spirits responsible for misfortune.

Illustrating the syncretic nature of *Shugendō* is the supposedly *Tendai* practice of *kaihōgyō* ('circling the mountain journey') – of circumambulating Mount Hiei while chanting, meditating, and praying. Though clearly taking its inspiration from *Shugendō* mountain worship, the practice is traditionally said to have been started by the *Tendai* monk Sōō Oshō (831–918). *Kaihōgyō* practice can last for a day, for 100 days, or for 1,000 days carried out over a seven-year period. In the latter case, 25 to 50 miles are run on each of the 1,000 days. The 1,000 days are broken up into two phases. The merit acquired for the first 700 days is dedicated to the practitioner's benefit, and that of the remaining 300 to the benefit of others. Between the two phases, the practitioner undertakes an extraordinarily severe nine-day fast, abstaining from food, water, rest, and sleep. So gruelling is the practice that in the last 130 years only 46 participants have been able to complete the course.¹

The origins of *Shugendō* mountain worship lie in *kannabi shinkō*, a *Shintō* belief that the mountains are sacred, the dwelling of ancestors and deities (*kami*). *Shugendō* itself, as a loosely organized religious and spiritual system, arose when mountain asceticism came under the influence of Buddhism and Daoism during the Heian period (794–1184). The increasingly organized and politicized monastic Buddhism of the Heian period is also thought to have

invoked a response among some monks for a life of solitude and asceticism in the wilderness of the mountains. During the Heian period, *Shugendō* mountain centres were either independent or were linked with *Tendai* and *Shingon* institutions.

Shugendō accommodated elements of both *Shintō* and Buddhism, and its fate was linked to both. The syncretism of *Shintō* and Japanese Buddhism (which often shared the same shrines, temples, and officiating monks) had been a part of the Japanese religious landscape for many centuries. In 1868, however, when Emperor Meiji took back the power of the imperial throne from the feudal lords who had governed Japan under the overall rule of the *Tokugawa shōgun*, one of his first acts was to separate by decree the beliefs, practices and institutions of *Shintō* and Buddhism. In fact, Buddhism itself became a focus of persecution, especially during the early period of Emperor Meiji's rule. In 1872, *Shugendō* was legally banned for its eclectic mix of traditions, and officiating *Shugendō* monks were offered a three-way choice of either entirely relinquishing their priestly role, or becoming priests of *Shintō* shrines, or accepting full ordination as monks with whichever *Tendai* or *Shingon* tradition they had been previously affiliated. It was not until 1946, with the introduction of post-war legislation regarding religious freedom, that *Shugendō* was once again permitted a self-determining existence. This prompted the re-emergence of a number of independent *Shugendō* schools that had taken refuge in the *Tendai* and *Shingon* traditions. *Shugendō* still exists in modern Japan, although it enjoys only a fraction of its former popularity.

Shugendō is generally said to have been founded by the late seventh-century mountain ascetic En no Gyōja (En the Ascetic), although his life has been mythologized to the extent that it is difficult to separate fact from fiction. En no Gyōja – also called En no Ubasoku (En the lay monk) or by his proper name En no Ozunu – is said to have scaled and consecrated many of the mountain peaks, establishing numerous *Shugendō* sanctuaries and laying the foundation of the future pilgrimage routes travelled by the *yamabushi*. He is also said to have founded the monastery on Mount Ōmine as the headquarters of *Shugendō*, a position it has retained to the present day. In 699, again according to a legend, he was falsely accused of sorcery and of misleading people, as a result of which he was exiled to the volcanic island of Izu Ōshima. Though later pardoned, he decided to remain in the mountains.

En no Gyōja came from the mountainous region of Katsuragisan, which borders the present-day prefectures of Nara and Ōsaka. Mountains regarded by *Shugendō* as especially sacred include Yoshino mountain (in Nara), Kumano (in Wakayama), Haguro (in Yamagata), Hiko (in Kyūshū island), and Ishizuchi (in Shikoku island). Many of the pilgrimage routes through these mountainous areas have been revived since the 1946 legislation regarding religious freedom.

The first official records of the *yamabushi* or *shugenja* date from the eleventh century, by which time *Shugendō* appears to have become prevalent

throughout Japan, even represented in the imperial court, where the *yamabushi* played the part of advisers, healers, soothsayers, and so on. In 1799, the Emperor Kōkaku posthumously granted En no Gyōja the title of Shinben Daibosatsu (‘Miraculous Great *Bodhisattva*’).

Among the various *Shugendō* pilgrimage routes of modern times are Mount Ōmine and Mount Kinpusen (whose temple is also said to have been founded by En no Gyōja), both of which lie within the Yoshino-Kumano National Park in Japan’s Kansai region. Designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2004, the park remains a popular pilgrimage centre and *yamabushi* training area. White-robed modern *yamabushi* can still be seen bearing conch-shell trumpets on their belts and a book of incantations on their backs.²

See also: **yamabushi** (7.1).

1. Adharanand Finn, “What I learned when I met the monk who ran 1,000 marathons,” *The Guardian*, theguardian.com, ret. September 2016.
2. See “Hieiizan,” “kaihōgyō,” “Shugendō,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, PDB*; “shugendō,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism, ODB*; “Mount Ōmine,” “Shugendō,” “Yamabushi,” *Wikipedia*, ret. June 2013; “Shugendō,” *A-to-Z Photo Dictionary, AZPD*; “space, sacred,” *Encyclopedia of Buddhism, EBRB*.

shurakā’ (A) *Lit.* partner; idol. See **but**.

sì dà fó jiào míng shān (C) *Lit.* four (sì) famous (míng) mountains (shān) of Buddhism (fó jiào); four Chinese mountains, regarded as sacred by Buddhists and visited as popular pilgrimage sites; each of the mountains is believed to be the place where four main celestial *bodhisattvas* have appeared, attained enlightenment, and expounded their teachings. These four mountains and their associated *bodhisattvas* have become emblematic of the four cardinal directions. They are the location of beautiful monasteries, Buddhist libraries, items of cultural antiquity, and outstanding scenery. Several other Chinese mountains are also considered sacred, some by Buddhists, some by Daoists. The four mountains are:

Mount	Province	<i>Bodhisattva</i>	Virtue	Direction
Wútái shān	Shānxī	Wénshū (S. Mañjushrī)	great wisdom	North
Éméi shān	Sìchuān	Pǔxián (S. Samantabhadra)	great conduct	West
Pǔtúo shān	Zhèjiāng	Guānyīn (S. Avalokiteshvara)	great compassion	East
Jiūhuá shān	Ānhuī	Dìzàng (S. Kshitigarbha)	great vows	South

See also: **tīrtha**.

siddha-chakra (S) *Lit.* wheel (*chakra*) of perfection (*siddha*); a Jain yantra. See **Olī**.

sīguò (C) *Lit.* to consider (*sī*) a fault (*guò*); to reflect on one's past errors; to examine one's faults; based on the principle, first appearing in the *Tàipíng jīng* ('Scripture on Great Peace', C2nd), of 'inherited burden (*chéngfù*)'. Individuals first reflect upon their past errors (*sīguò*), which they then confess (*shǒuguò*) to the celestial deities, and attempt to correct themselves (*zìzé*). See **chéngfù**.

sindūr (H/U) *Lit.* vermillion; a bright red powder consisting of red lead (lead tetroxide, a toxic oxide of lead); one of the traditional substances used by Indian men for the *tilak* (mark, sign) applied to the forehead, and by married women for the *bindī* (a round dot on the forehead) and also, in some parts of India, along the parting in the hair. In modern times, the *bindī* is often a self-adhesive, manufactured material of some kind. See **bindu**, **tilaka**.

snān(a) (S/H), **ishnān**, **isnān** (Pu) *Lit.* bathing, washing, ablution, immersion; religious ablutions and lustrations; bathing in sacred waters; a Hindu and Jain rite of purification in which bathing is regarded not only as a hygienic necessity, but also as a religious and ritual obligation; appears in some lists of the *shaṭ-karma* (six actions). Contrary to the normal tradition, not bathing (*asnānatva*) is included among a number of vows taken by Jain ascetics.

Spiritually, *snāna* implies inner cleansing – cleansing the mind of material impurities such as falsehood, violence, lust, anger, intemperance of all kinds, and so on.

Snāna also implies a more mystical cleansing – bathing in the sacred 'lake' of pure spirit known as *mānasarovar*, situated in *daswān dwār*, the third spiritual region according to the descriptions of some Indian saints. It is there that the soul becomes free from all impurities of the mind and *māyā*, and is then described as a *haṃsa* (pure swan) capable of ascending into the yet higher spiritual realms.

The purpose of the rite is to wash away sin. Those who set out to perform the ritual, in addition to following the instructions of the officiating priest, are expected to do so in a penitent frame of mind, and to make certain preparations, such as fasting and making various offerings. The *Upanishads*, while not altogether rejecting external practices, look more to inner purification:

Withdrawing the mind from sensory objects is *dhyāna* (contemplation). Purifying the mind of its impurities is *snāna*. Control of the

senses is *shaucha* (purification)... Being devoted to the One, one should live in that solitary Place that is free from duality. This is the way that a wise man should live; he alone will attain liberation.

Maitreya Upanishad 2:3–4; cf. SUAR p.180, TMU p.21

Being in that eternal brightness and shoreless expanse of nectar constitutes *snāna*.

Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad 2:2; cf. TMU p.189, YU p.232

Guru Arjun maintains that all the benefits of giving in charity or bathing at holy places is acquired by contact with the divine Word or Name:

By *guru*'s grace (*parsādī*), your face shall be radiant.
Chanting the *Nām*, you shall receive the benefits
of giving charity and taking cleansing baths (*isnān*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 46, AGK

See also: **shaṭ-karma**.

sòng, niàn, sòngjīng, niànjīng, yín'é (C) *Lit.* to recite, repeat, or chant (*niàn, sòng*); to recite or chant the scriptures (*niànjīng, sòngjīng*); to chant, to recite rhythmically (*yín'é*).

Ritual recitation and chanting became a major aspect of Daoist ritual from at least the *Táng* dynasty (618–907). Its development appears to have been influenced by Chinese Buddhist methods of recitation, such as the chanting of Buddhist *sūtras*. Several Daoist texts, including the *Dàodé jīng* (c. C3rd BCE), have mnemonic rhythmic patterns that lend themselves to easy memorization and to chanting. Indeed, some Daoist texts were composed specifically for the purpose of ritual chanting, many with four- to five-character combinations in a rhyming and/or rhythmic pattern, lending themselves to melodious chanting styles.

During important occasions and in wealthier temples, music accompanies recitation and chanting as part of Daoist religious ceremonies. The most common instruments are the prayer bell and the wooden fish-drum, which sets the rhythm. More elaborate performances include the use of cymbals, gongs, and additional drums.

For practitioners of *nèidān* (inner alchemy), chanting was a way to open up the throat area, thus allowing the energy to flow unhindered through the body. The sounds of the repeated chant were believed to resonate and open the internal centre associated with that particular sound. Changes in the pattern of breathing and in the speed of repetition could bring similar benefits.

stava, stavan(a) (S/H) *Lit.* praise; a hymn of praise or devotion; eulogy, panegyric, encomium; a term common to Jain, Buddhist and Hindu traditions, which include a great many hymns of praise; also called a *stotra*.

In the Hindu tradition, for instance, the well-known *Mahimna* ('Greatness') *Stava*, traditionally believed to have been written by *Pushpadanta* ('Flower-Toothed'), leader of the *gandharvas* (celestial spirits, heavenly singers), extols the greatness of *Shiva* as the bestower of happiness and the *guru* of the gods. The hymn is also known as the *Shiva-mahimna Stotra*.

In Jainism,¹ *stavas* are addressed to a *Tīrthankara* during daily *pūjā* (worship) or on occasions such as marriages, funerals, the ending of a fast, and so on. Some *stavas* are dedicated to particular *Tīrthankaras*. The singing of *stavas* is done individually, even in a contemplative frame of mind. *Stavas* are also performed by choirs (*maṇḍal*), often comprised of women. *Stavan* is the term generally used for hymns composed in languages such as Hindi and Gujarati.

Three ancient hymns in particular are common to both *Digambara* and *Shvetāmbara* traditions. The *Nāma-jina Stava*, also called the *Chaturviṃshati Stava* ('Praise of the Twenty-Four'), invokes the names (*nāma*) of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* (also known as *Jinas*) of the present cycle of time according to Jain cosmology. The *Shruta Stava* praises the *dharma* (teachings, path) taught by the *Tīrthankaras* and preserved in the scriptures (*shruta*). The *Shakra-stava* or *Shakra-stava Sūtra* (also known as the *Namutthuṇam Sūtra*), which is traditionally said to have been composed by the deity *Indra* (also called *Shakra*), eulogizes the qualities of the *Tīrthankaras*:

I bow to the *arahanta bhagavantas*.

I bow to the *Jinas*, those who started the scriptures,
the *Tīrthankaras*, and the self-enlightened ones.

I bow to the best among men, the lions among men,
the best lotuses among men. . . .

I bow to the best in the world, the guides of the world,
the benefactors of the world, the beacons of the world,
and the enlighteners of the world.

I bow to the liberators from fear, the givers of vision,
the givers of the path, the givers of refuge,
the givers of right conviction, and the givers of enlightenment.

I bow to the givers of law, the preachers of law, the masters of law,
the leaders of law, the world monarchs of law,
and those who are the best in all the four directions.

I bow to those who are liberated from the bondage of false knowledge,
who are the holders of unrestricted and best knowledge and faith,
who in this world are the light, the liberators, the refuge,
and the movers and givers of rest.

I bow to those who are the victors and the givers of victory,
 the saviours and the saved,
 the givers of enlightenment and the enlightened,
 and the givers of liberation and the liberated.
 I bow to the all-knowing, all-seeing *Jinas*,
 who have conquered fear and who have attained the happy,
 stable, formless, infinite, imperishable, unobstructed,
 and eternally perfect state and existence.
 I bow to Bhagavān Mahāvīra, the last *Tīrthankara*,
 whose advent was determined by the preceding *Tīrthankaras*.
 I pay homage and I bow to the Lord,
 and may the revered Lord cast His gracious glances at me here.
Shakra Stava; cf. NSSS

Numerous *stavas* similarly exist in the Buddhist tradition. Some are in praise of the *Dharma* (Path) or other aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Many praise the qualities of the Buddha (his enlightenment, majesty, *etc.*), such as the Sanskrit *catuḥ-stava* (four hymns) attributed to the Buddhist philosopher Nāgārjuna and known as the *Lokātīta* ('Transcending the World'), *Nirāupamyā* ('Peerless'), *Achintya* ('Inconceivable'), and *Paramārtha* ('Ultimate Truth') *stavas*. Once popular in Indian *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, more than four *stavas* are claimed as belonging to the *catuḥ-stava*, and which of them, if any, are the originals is uncertain.²

Among the many other Buddhist *stavas*, is the poignant *Deshanā Stava* ('Hymn of Confession') of the seventh-century Indian master Chandragomin. He compares spiritually ill human beings to lepers who know they are seriously sick, yet "only occasionally take medicine":

Our minds are constantly confused;
 We have been ill for a very long time.
 What is achieved by lepers
 who have lost their arms and legs
 but only occasionally take medicine?

Chandragomin, Deshanā Stava, TTS, P2048 98:3.8–4.1; cf. in GTE1 (24) p.60

Although the meaning of the analogy is clear, it should be added that so far as is known, there was no effective treatment for leprosy in the seventh century.

See also: **stotra**.

1. See "stava(n)," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.
2. See "catuḥstava," *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB.

sthāpanāchārya (S) *Lit.* standing in place (*sthāpana*) + teacher (*āchārya*); symbolic teacher; something that stands in the place of an *āchārya*; a ritual item carried by *Shvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka* (image worshipper) mendicants to symbolize the presence of the head *āchārya* of their order, even in his physical absence.

When a mendicant performs certain rites in the absence of his *āchārya*, he reverentially places the *sthāpanāchārya* before him on a cushion or on the ground as a reminder that spiritually he is not alone, but is in the presence of his *āchārya* and others in the ascended, Jain spiritual hierarchy. This helps him to adopt the proper attitude of reverence and devotion. Such rites include *guru-vandana* (veneration of the teacher), performed by reciting prayers and *mantras*; delivery of a spiritual discourse (*pravachana*); and *pratikramaṇa* (confession).

Various designs of *sthāpanāchārya* are found. Sometimes, they are made from three sticks arranged as an open tripod. Sometimes, four sticks are bound together in the middle, with the ends splayed out above and below in the shape of an hourglass or a collapsible canvas stool. When opened, the *sthāpanāchārya* is seen to contain five small conch shells or five round pieces of seashell, symbolizing the *pañcha* (five)-*parameshṭhins* (great beings) who are deemed worthy of worship. These five are the *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (disembodied, perfected, liberated ones), *āchāryas* (mendicant leaders), *upādhyāyas* (preceptors), and *sādhus* (ordinary mendicants). The shells remind the monk that he is always in the presence of the ascended hierarchy. Sometimes, the *sthāpanāchārya* is replaced by a book containing the revered *Pañcha-Parameshṭhin* and the *Pañchīṇḍiya Sūtras*, placed upon the *āchārya*'s seat on a special cross-legged bookstand used for scriptures. In modern times, the book on its bookstand has also become known as a *sthāpanāchārya*.

stotra (S/H) *Lit.* a hymn of praise; eulogy, panegyric, encomium; also called a *stava*; from the verb *stu* (to praise) and related to *stuti* (praise, worship); a popular form of devotional literature, of which there are a great many in the Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. Some were written in ancient times, even as far back as the *Vedas*, others are more recent.

In Hindu tradition, *stotras* are often addressed to a deity such as *Shiva*, *Vishṇu*, or *Devī*. Some are essentially a list of names for that deity, such as the traditional *Vishṇu Sahasranāma* ('Thousand Names of *Vishṇu*'), recited with the intention of invoking the help and grace of the deity. The *Rāmarakshā* ('Protection Given by *Rāma*') *Stotra*, a devotional prayer invoking the protection of *Rāma*, is a Sanskrit *stotra* written by Budhakaushika during the Vedic period, praising the divine qualities of *Rāma* and seeking His protection. The popular *Pañchākshara* ('Five Letters') *Stotra*, by the ninth-century philosopher and mystic Shankara, is addressed to *Shiva*. It is

based upon the *mantra* “*Aum namaḥ Shivāya*” by taking the five syllables of *na-ma-shi-va-ya* as the starting point for its five verses in praise of *Shiva*. The *mantra* is also called the *pañchākshara mantra*.

In Jainism, too, there are many *stotras* written in praise of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* of the present era, according to Jain cosmology. Among the best known is the Sanskrit *Bhaktāmara* (‘Devoted Gods’) *Stotra*, accepted by both *Digambaras* and *Shvetāmbaras*, which was written in praise of *Ṛishabha*, the first *Tīrthankara*. The title is drawn from the first verse, which describes the gods bowing before *Ṛishabha*. According to the traditional stories, the *stotra* was written by a court poet, *Mānatunga*. In order to demonstrate the *stotra*’s power to the king, *Mānatunga* was bound in multiple chains. Successive chains were broken with the recitation of each verse, until eventually he was free. The *stotra* became a part of the Jain tantric tradition, with manuscripts containing *yantras* (esoteric diagrams) and *mantras* (verbal formulae) associated with the recitation of the individual verses. Scholars are inclined to think that *Mānatunga* was a sixth-century *Shvetāmbara* devotional poet.¹

See also: **stava**.

1. See “*Bhaktāmara Stotra*,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

stūpa (S), **thūpa** (Pa), **mchod rten** (T), **tă** (C), **tō** (J), **dāgoba** (Sinhala), **paya** (Burmese) *Lit.* heap, pile; a mound of earth, bricks, and so on; anglicized as ‘stupa’; a Buddhist building or structure, traditionally hemispherical, built to house the relics (*śarīra-dhātu*, *śarīra*) or possessions of the Buddha or of a departed holy man or woman, and which are generally held in a special container (reliquary); an elaborate form of the pre-Buddhist grave mound. Stupas are also used for meditation, and as a focus for veneration and homage.

According to the Pali *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha gives instructions that his relics should be enshrined in a stupa built at a crossroads. But as things turn out, eight clans lay claim to the relics, and after some deliberation it is decided to divide the relics into eight portions. Each clan then builds a stupa to house the portion assigned to them, together with two further stupas by those who had received the ashes and the urn. The Buddha says that relics and stupas are helpful because they remind people of him and of his teachings, and he gives instructions for his remains to be placed in a stupa, saying that anyone who visits a stupa with reverence will find benefit and happiness for a long time after. He also adds that anyone who dies on a pilgrimage to a stupa with thoughts of reverence in his mind will be “reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness (*saggaḷoka*)”.¹ As a result, many stupas have become popular Buddhist pilgrimage sites (S. *tīrtha*), with ritual clockwise circumambulation (S. *parikramā*) on well-prepared pathways being a significant part of the rites.

Archaeological records suggest that after the collapse of the tolerant Gupta Empire (fl.320–550) in the sixth century, the practice of enshrining relics in stupas died out. In the place of relics are found small clay tablets or miniature stupas engraved or stamped with a four line verse from the Pali texts that encapsulate the Buddha's doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), regarded as the essence of his teaching:

Those things that proceed from a cause,
the Tathāgata has declared their cause,
and that which is their cessation.
Thus has the great holy man (*samaṇa*) taught.

Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga 1, PTSV1 p.41; cf. BDV4 p.54

Stupas have been constructed for several other reasons. Many have been built in honour of a monk deemed to have been particularly deserving. Earning merit (*puṇya*) has been another major motivation. There are also financial incentives. Pilgrimage and large stupa sites complete with temples and monasteries, frequently supported by the state, often with a market and a considerable area of adjoining land, attract large numbers of people, stimulating the local economy, and providing work and business for local merchants and artisans, all leading to a healthy flow of revenue from devotees.

The classical, hemispherical Buddhist stupa of India spread along with Buddhism into many Eastern countries, where the form has been modified and embellished, often significantly, according to local architectural styles. The Sri Lankan *dāgoba* (S. *dhātu-garbha*, 'relics womb', 'relics chamber') for instance, has a spire on top; the Burmese *paya* (holy one; applied to people, deities, God, and places associated with religion) is more elongated, typically built as a narrow pyramid-like tower with several storeys, each with an upward-curving roof; the Tibetan *mchod rten* (*chörten*) is more architecturally complex, built on a square base, with several stepped storeys on top, surmounted by a dome, with a cone on top; the Chinese *pagoda* – from the Portuguese *pagode*, an attempted rendering of the Sanskrit *bhagavatī* (divine) – is of quintessentially Chinese design, often multistorey and used for a variety of purposes, including secular.

Several categories of stupa, not necessarily exclusive, have been identified. There are those containing the relics of the Buddha, his disciples or other Buddhist holy men and women; those containing the possessions of the Buddha or his disciples, such as begging bowls, robes, or books of scripture; those built in memory of some event in the life of the Buddha or his disciples; those built to commemorate a visit or to acquire spiritual merit (*puṇya*); and those that symbolize some aspects of Buddhist teaching.

The architectural features of these buildings are often invested with a rich symbolism. A stupa, in itself, often visible from a distance, reminds the local community of the invisible omnipresence of the Buddha. Like a grave, it is

also a reminder of mortality, and the transience of life and all things in this world. Individual sites may have their own particular symbolism. Borobudur, an extraordinary, probably eighth- and ninth-century, *Mahāyāna* stupa and temple complex in Java, is the biggest Buddhist temple in the world. Estimated to have been built over a period of around seventy-five years, it is thought to symbolize the three worlds (of desire, form, and formlessness) and the spiritual stages (*bhūmi*) traversed by a *bodhisattva*. Hidden for several hundred years beneath volcanic ash and jungle regeneration, it was discovered by the British in the nineteenth century, restored during the twentieth, and has developed into a popular pilgrimage site. Visitors who circumambulate the stupa are presented with scenes from the Buddha's life, tales of his past births, and *Mahāyāna sūtras*. Ascending from the bottom of the stupa to the top is believed to symbolize the journey from the world of *samsāra* to *nirvāṇa*.

The equally magnificent Swayambhunāth stupa and temple complex, built on a hilltop in the valley of Kathmandu (Nepal), is a *Vajrayāna* (tantric Buddhist) complex, built as an architectural *maṇḍala*, replete with symbolic meaning. Among its most obvious features are its huge dome representing the world, and its thirteen pinnacles symbolizing the thirteen stages on the road to enlightenment. The four pairs of eyes on each side of the spire that sits atop the main dome symbolize wisdom and compassion; and above and between these two eyes is the third eye, the divine eye of the Buddha that sees all things. Images of the five celestial or wisdom *buddhas* have been carved into each side of the stupa and there are statues of them at its base. Each *buddha* represents a different aspect of wisdom and consciousness.

There are many other exotic and elaborate temple and stupa complexes in the Buddhist world. These include:

Boudhanāth. One of the world's largest stupas, probably built or rebuilt in the fourteenth century in Kathmandu after the Mughal invasions on an ancient trade route between Tibet and Nepal. However, its origins and history are surrounded by much legend and mythology, with some Nepalese chronicles dating its origins to as early as the fifth century CE.

Botataung Paya ('Stupa of the One Thousand Officers'). In Myanmar; commemorates the one thousand military leaders who escorted relics of the Buddha from India over two thousand years ago. The original stupa was destroyed in World War II, and a relic chamber, twenty feet square and six feet high, was discovered in the process of the excavations preparatory to rebuilding the stupa. Inside the chamber was a round stone casket in the shape of a pagoda, twenty-three inches in diameter and thirty-nine inches high, containing a wealth of precious stones, ornaments, jewellery and over seven hundred terracotta plaques depicting scenes from Buddhist tradition.²

Jokhang Temple. Built in Lhasa during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo (r.604–650), founder of the Tibetan Empire that lasted until the ninth century, and regarded as the most important sacred site in Tibetan Buddhism.

Mahābodhi ('Great Enlightenment') Temple. A Buddhist stupa located in Bodh Gaya, India, built during the fifth and sixth centuries during the time of the Gupta Empire, and said to contain a descendant of the original Bodhi Tree under which Gautama Buddha gained enlightenment (bodhi).

Mahāthūpa ('Great Stupa'). A pure white stupa at Anurādhapura in Sri Lanka; an ancient and popular pilgrimage centre, built by King Duṭṭhagāmaṇi Abhaya (r.101–77 BCE) after his conquest of the Tamils. According to legend, the Mahāthūpa contains one of the eight original portions of the relics of the Buddha, which were being safeguarded by the *nāgas* (serpent kings) of the underworld, whence they found their way by miraculous means to Anurādhapura.

Pha That Luang ('Great Stupa in Lao'). A large, gold-covered stupa in Vientiane, Laos, featuring several terraces representing the levels of enlightenment. The original building was probably constructed in the third century CE, but has been rebuilt or remodelled several times due to the depredations of foreign invaders.

Shwedagon Pagoda ('Golden Pagoda'). Built in Yangon, Myanmar, between the sixth and tenth centuries; surrounded by many sparkling stupas with a central stupa rising ninety-nine metres and completely covered in gold.

Sri Dalada Maligawa ('Temple of the Tooth'). A famous temple in Kandy, Sri Lanka, believed to house a tooth relic of the Buddha.

Tōdaiji ('Great Eastern Temple'). Originally built in Nara, Japan, in the eighth century, during the *Nara* period; said to be the world's largest wooden building.

Wat Arun ('Temple of Dawn'). An architectural representation in Bangkok, Thailand, of Mount Meru, which is the centre of the universe according to Buddhist mythological cosmology.

See also: **sharīra-dhātu**.

1. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.140–68.
2. See “Botataung Paya,” *Wikipedia*, November 2015.

stuti (S) *Lit.* praise, adulation, eulogy, panegyric; a hymn of praise and adoration to God, deities, a *guru*, and so on; common to Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. *Stuti* refers to both the praise itself as well as to a particular hymn of praise.

Recitation of the *stuti* known as the *Chaturviṃshati Stava* – meaning ‘Praise (*stava*) of the Twenty-Four (*chaturviṃshati*)’ *Tīrthankaras* – is one of the six *āvashyakas*, which are practices or rites performed by Jain mendicant monks, though also recommended for the laity either daily or less frequently. Jain texts contain many *stutis*, which praise deities, *arahantas* (enlightened ones), or one or more of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* or *Jinas*. When recited as something other than mere ritual, the intention is to impress the qualities of the *Tīrthankara* upon one’s mind in the quest for spiritual understanding and liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

The hagiographic *Trishashṭi-shalākā-purusha-charitra* of Hemachandra contains numerous *stutis*, including one said to have been recited by Bharata, the first universal monarch (*chakravartin*, a mythological, all-powerful king), when overwhelmed by his meeting with Rishabha, the first *Tīrthankara*:

Praise of you by people like me
 is like measuring the ocean with a jug.
 Nevertheless, I shall praise you, O master,
 for my devotion cannot be restrained.
 People who associate with you become your equals, O lord,
 for candle wicks are lit by contact with light.
 Your teaching prevails –
 it is a cure that gives freedom from pride (*mada*),
 tames the wild elephant of the senses, and shows the Way.
 After destroying the destructive *karmas*,
 you are indifferent to the remaining *karmas* (that keep you here),
 I think, only to favour the world, O lord of the three worlds.
 Clinging to your feet, O lord, people cross the ocean of existence. . . .
 The sight of you is dawn from the deep sleep of delusion. . . .
 Through contact with your lotus feet, people’s *karma* is destroyed. . . .
 Your favour, O lord of the world, is rain from a cloud,
 moonlight from the moon, beneficial to all.

Hemachandra, Trishashṭi-shalākā-purusha-charitra 1:6.173–80; cf. *TSP1* p.339

See also: **āvashyaka**, **stava**, **vandana**.

subḥah (A), **subḥat** (P) (pl. *subuḥāt*) *Lit.* majesty, glory; a rosary for repeating prayers or reciting the names of God, usually having thirty-three or ninety-nine beads, the commonest prayer formulae being *Subḥānahu* (Glory to Him) or “*Subḥān Allāh* (Glory to God, Praise God)!”; also called a *tasbīḥ* or *misbahah*.

See also: **tasbīḥ**.

Sukkot (He) *Lit.* booths, shelters, tabernacles; temporary dwellings, a temporary building, walled with wood, canvas, sheets or (in modern times) metal sheets, and roofed over with leaves and branches; a form of dwelling used by farmers during the harvest season; the Feast of Tabernacles; a Jewish eight-day festival, with the first day celebrated on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (*Tishrei*), which falls between late September and late October; commemorates the Israelites’ wanderings in the Sinai desert for forty years after their exodus from Egypt and the divine protection they received during their journeys, as related in the Bible;¹ also, the Feast of Ingathering (*Ḥag ha-Asiph*), which celebrates the autumn harvest and the end of the agricultural year in Israel. Activities on the first day include special prayers and festive meals.

Observance of the Feast of Ingathering is commanded in *Exodus*:

You shall observe the Feast of Weeks (*Shavu’ot*), the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the Feast of Ingathering (*Ḥag ha-Asiph*) at the year’s end.

Exodus 34:22; cf. KJV

Details of the various festivals to be observed in the Jewish calendar are stipulated in *Leviticus*. Regarding the celebration of *Sukkot*, *Leviticus* instructs:

On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruit of the land, you must keep a feast of *Yahweh* for seven days; the first day must be a Sabbath, and the eighth day must be a Sabbath. On the first day, you must take choice fruits, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees and willows from the river bank; and for seven days you must rejoice in the presence of *Yahweh* your God. You are to celebrate a feast for *Yahweh* in this way for seven days every year. This is a perpetual law for all future generations: you must celebrate it in the seventh month; you must dwell in shelters (*sukkot*) for seven days. All native Israelites are to dwell in shelters (*sukkot*), so that future generations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in shelters (*sukkot*), when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

Leviticus 23:39–43; cf. JB, KJV

See also: **Pesaḥ**.

1. *Deuteronomy* 1:1–11:32; *Numbers* 1:1–36:13.

sūtra (S/H), **sutta** (Pa) *Lit.* thread; specifically, the sacred thread worn by orthodox *brāhmaṇs*, or the thread on which are strung the beads of a rosary; from the root *siv*, to sew; also applied to the stitching together of the leaves of manuscripts; thus, *sūtras*, short aphorisms constituting in their totality a body of doctrine on some subject; short sentences, aphoristic rules, terse sayings, pithy statements, each more or less a suggestive formula embodying a lesson; hence, any work or manual consisting of strings of such rules, hanging together like threads, usually as summaries of other texts or as doctrine for practical application. These statements are not intended as expository statements, but as aids to memory. However, since they are brief, they lend themselves to divergent interpretations, the cryptic statements often requiring a commentary or explanation to make them intelligible.

Hindu literature has many examples of *sūtras*. These include the *Dharma Sūtra*, *Grihya Sūtra*, *Kalpa Sūtra*, *Shrauta Sūtra*, *Vedānta Sūtra* (also known as *Brahma Sūtra*), and Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*.

In Buddhism, *sūtras* or *suttas* (Pa) are collections of classic dialogues and discourses. The Pali *suttas* of the *Theravāda* tradition, presented as discourses and dialogues of the Buddha, represent the oldest stratum of Buddhist literature. Traditionally believed to have been preserved orally until committed to writing in 29 BCE (around 450 years after the Buddha's death), their authenticity is very difficult to verify. The later *Mahāyāna sūtras* date from the second to the sixth centuries CE, as for instance the *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* ('True Law of the Lotus *Sūtra*', generally known as the 'Lotus *Sūtra*') and the *Vajrachchedikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* ('Thunderbolt Cutter Perfection of Wisdom *Sūtra*', generally known as the 'Diamond *Sūtra*').

The sacred thread worn by the members of the three higher castes of Hindu society is also called the *sūtra* or *janeu*.

See also: **upanayana**.

swastika (S. *svastika*; Pa. *sotthika*, *sotthiya*, *sovatthika*; T. *bkra shis*, *gyung drung*; C. *wàn*, *wànzì*; J. *manji*) An anglicization of the Sanskrit *svastika*, meaning 'lucky object', 'lucky symbol', 'auspicious thing', and derived from 'is (*asti*) + well (*su*)' or 'well (*su*) being (*asti*)' + the suffix *ka*; an ancient symbol of good fortune formed as an equilateral cross with its four arms bent at right angles, pointing either to the right or to the left; the earliest known form of a cross as a symbol in human religion; categorized as a *rakshā yantra* (protection *yantra*).

Though stigmatized in recent times due to its adoption in the first half of the twentieth century by the National Socialist German Workers' Party – generally referred to in English as the Nazi Party – the ancient *svastika* remains a popular auspicious symbol in Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions. In modern times, in view of its negative connotations, the *svastika* is sometimes replaced by the auspicious symbol representing *Aum*.

Early Western travellers in Asia, intrigued by its positive associations, introduced the symbol of the swastika to their native lands. By the start of the twentieth century, the design was even being used in architecture, advertising, and product packaging. It was, *inter alia*, the name of a California fruit distribution company, a good-luck motif on the back of playing cards, the shape of an engraved advertisement for Coca-Cola, a part of the design on Carlsberg beer bottles, an insignia of the Boy Scouts, and the name of a magazine published by the Girls' Club of America, who also sent out swastika-shaped badges to young readers who sold the magazine. American military units used it during World War I, and it was present on RAF planes, even as late as 1939. Most of these uses came to a halt in the 1930s, with the rise of Nazi power in Germany.

The Nazi use of the swastika arose from the research of nineteenth-century German scholars who noticed the similarities between Sanskrit and German (both being members of the Indo-European group of languages). From these similarities in language they theorized the existence of a dominant race of white proto-Indo-Europeans, whom they called Aryans (speakers of Indo-Iranian in the centuries BCE called themselves *āryas* – 'noble ones'), from whom semitic and other races were excluded. The notion was subsequently appropriated by anti-Semitic groups such as the Nazis. In 1910, a poet and nationalist ideologist, Guido von List, suggested the swastika as an Aryan symbol for all anti-Semitic groups and, in 1919–1920, it was adopted by the newly formed Nazi Party. In 1921, Hitler, having earlier laid down the colours of the new flag in his *Mein Kampf*, insisted that the symbol rest at a 45-degree angle, to orient it more in an 'S'-direction. He also insisted that the right-angled bends should point to the right (the converse of the Buddhist swastika). As an emblem of Nazism, the swastika, once a symbol of good-fortune and well-being, rapidly became associated with bigotry, hatred, and atrocity. In 1935, it was incorporated into the German national flag, a use that ended after World War II with the German surrender in May 1945.

The geometric design known in modern times as the swastika has ancient origins. It is first found as a decorative and probably religious motif (though often with no specific evidence of auspicious or religious overtones) on pottery, as well as stone, metal and other carvings from a number of archaeological sites in Europe, Africa, and Asia. The earliest-known such artefacts are those of birds and other objects, carved from mammoth tusk, bearing intricate meandering designs like joined-up swastikas. These early artefacts

were discovered at Mezhirich in the Ukraine, and are dated between 15,000 and 10,000 BCE. A study of artefacts from European bronze and iron age sites indicate that the swastika sometimes represents the sun, sometimes eternity, sometimes – perhaps – a bird (possibly a crane) in flight. At other times, it is probably no more than a fairly obvious geometric and decorative motif.

In ancient Greece, the swastika was known by a number of names, including the *gammadion* or *tetra-gammadion*, the swastika being comprised of four linked representations of the ancient Greek character, the capital *gamma* (Γ). The symbol appears either singly or in repeating, interlinked designs in architecture, and on clothing, ornaments, and coins. Priestesses of ancient Greece had the symbol tattooed on their bodies, indicating its religious significance. In India, the first evidence of the symbol is probably in the Indus Valley civilization, dating from around 3,000 BCE. Since there are clear correspondences between ancient Greek and Hindu mythology, it is probable that the use of the symbol in the two cultures is not coincidental.

As a specifically religious symbol, often as intricate elaborations on the basic pattern, the *svastika* first gained significance in Buddhism during the Mauryan Empire (322–185 BCE) in India as a symbol of the Buddha and good fortune, prosperity, and eternity. Images of the Buddha generally have a *svastika* on the chest, palms, and soles of the feet. The *svastika* also represents the feet or footprints of the Buddha, and is often found at the beginning and end of inscriptions. The *svastika* is also a symbol of the 10,000 perfections of the Buddha¹ as well as of eternity. The earliest Buddhist art did not represent the Buddha in his physical form, but sometimes indicated his presence by means of the *svastika*. As a revolving cross, the Buddhist *svastika* also represents the perpetual activity of the universal life principle in the ever-evolving cosmos.

The *svastika* was adopted by the Hindu tradition concurrently with the decline of Buddhism in India during the Gupta Empire (c.320–550 CE). Following the gradual spread of Buddhism, the swastika became a prevalent auspicious symbol in the iconography of Tibet, China, and Japan. In Tibet, where the *svastika* is known as *gyung drung* (eternity, changelessness) and *bkra shis* (auspiciousness, good fortune), it was absorbed by the indigenous *Bön* tradition, which has been deeply influenced by Buddhism in many respects. Modern Tibetan Buddhists use the *svastika* as a motif in fabric design. In Bali, the *svastika* gained popularity under the influence of Bali's Hindu kings during the first millennium CE.

The gradual introduction of the Buddhist *svastika* into China began as early as the third century BCE, if not before, with the migration along the Silk Road of sculpture and other art forms bearing the symbol. But swastika-like ornamental motifs had been used in China to decorate art forms since at least 2,000 BCE, long before the advent of Buddhism. The symbol's independent use has been found on Chinese coins dated 315 BCE, on a silk print dated

to 2,100 BCE, and on a red earthenware funeral urn found in Gānsù, which has been dated to between 2,200 to 1,800 BCE.² Any use of the *svastika* by Chinese Daoists is generally presumed to be from Buddhist influence.

The inclusion of left- and right-pointing swastikas in Chinese writing took place following the formal introduction of Buddhism by Buddhist missionaries during the first century CE. In 693 CE – having elevated Buddhism above Daoism – Empress Wǔ Zétiān declared the swastika (which had come to mean ‘all’ or ‘eternity’) to be the source of all good fortune, and she decreed that it should henceforth be regarded as a Chinese character, to be pronounced *wàn* like the homophonic character *wàn* (ten thousand; hence myriad, all, eternity),³ which it also represented. In the *Kāngxī Zìdiǎn* (‘Kāngxī Dictionary,’ 1716) – the standard Chinese dictionary during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries – the entry for *wàn* (swastika) reads: “Synonym of ‘myriad’. It is used mostly in Buddhist classic texts.” During her reign, Empress Wǔ Zétiān created several new forms of the already existing characters, including a swastika inside a circle, which came to designate the sun. The *wàn* (swastika) character in Chinese has no meaning other than its own shape as a Buddhist auspicious symbol, and is thus only used in the compound word *wànzi* (‘swastika character’) – sometimes written using the character for *wàn* (10,000) – especially to describe the swastika motif in decorative arts.

Wànzi entered the Japanese language (phonetically rendered as *manji*) around the eight century, when the Chinese writing system was introduced to Japan. However, when referring to the forty-five degree, right-pointing swastika emblem used by the Nazi party in Germany, the Japanese use the term *ha-kenkuroitsu*, a phonetic rendering of *hakenkreuz*, which is the usual German word for swastika. In Japanese cartography, the left-pointing swastika is used to indicate the location of Buddhist temples.

In 1922, a voluntary association called the Shìjiè hóngwànzhìhuì (‘World Red Swastika Society’, still active today with branches in Malaysia and Singapore) was founded in China as the philanthropic branch of Dàoyuàn (‘Society of the *Dào*’). Also known as Dàodé shè (‘Society of *Dào* and Virtue’), it is a syncretist Daoist school, one of a number of new societies founded at that time in China. It drew on Western examples such as the Red Cross to build charitable institutions grounded in religions such as Buddhism and Daoism.⁴

In the Jain and Hindu traditions, the *svastika* is an auspicious symbol, placed on the opening pages of account books, on doors, thresholds, or on the head or body during religious rites and festivals, especially *Dīwali*. The clockwise *svastika* also symbolizes the sun and its passage from East to West. It is a common symbol, found on everyday things such as buildings both religious and secular, clothing, houses, walls, business logos and vehicles, often as part of a decorative design. Many of the ubiquitous Indian auto-rickshaws have one or more *svastikas* painted on them. It is even painted

on walls in the attempt to prevent men from urinating against them. In the tantric tradition, the anticlockwise *svastika* is associated with the night, the terrible and terrifying goddess *Kālī*, and the magical practices of the left-hand path (*vāma-mārga*). *Svastika* is also the name of a seated, cross-legged yogic posture (*āsana*), mentioned in many yogic texts, in which the feet are placed between the thighs and knees of the other leg. Over time, oriental representations of the *svastika* have become increasingly ornate.

Among other things, the *svastika* is believed to represent the curl mark on the breast of *Vishṇu* and his incarnation (*avatāra*) *Kṛishṇa*. In Hindu lore, the Buddha is regarded as the *avatāra* of *Vishṇu* who followed *Kṛishṇa*. Adopted into Buddhism, the curl mark is interpreted as the curl of hair or curl mark on the Buddha's breast, understood symbolically as the imprint or seal of the universal *buddha*-heart, present in every living being. The curl mark is one of the thirty-two primary marks (*dvātriṃshadvāra-lakṣhaṇa*) or indications of a *buddha* or *mahāpurusha* (great man).

More religious significance is given to the *svastika* in the Jain than in the Hindu tradition. Often it is reproduced in a more complex design using five *svastikas* and known as the *nandyāvarta* (diagram). It is one of the eight auspicious symbols (*aṣṭa-mangala*), and is a symbol associated with Supārshvanātha, the seventh *Tīrthankara* in the present cycle of time. It has been found on votive tablets (*āyāgapāṭas*) from the second- and third-century in the North Indian city of Mathurā. It is generally printed in all Jain religious publications and is displayed at Jain temples. Ceremonies usually begin and end with the creation of several *svastikas* formed with rice around the focus of worship; and offerings of fruit (fresh or dried), sweetmeats and money are placed on *svastikas* formed out of rice before the statue of a *Tīrthankara*. The four arms of the *svastika* are understood to symbolize the fourfold Jain community of monks (*sādhu*), nuns (*sādhvī*), laymen (*shrāvaka*), and laywomen (*shrāvikā*). They are also interpreted as symbols of the fourfold states of existence, where incarnate souls (*jīvas*) dwell in the cycle of transmigration, namely: *devas* (gods), who live in *svarga* (heaven); *nāraki* (hellish beings), who live in *naraka* (hell); *manushya* (human beings); and *tiryāṇch* (all other plant and animal species). In view of the *svastika*'s negative associations, North American Jains have adopted the symbol *Aum* in its place.⁵

See also: **ashṭa-mangala**.

1. See Karl Menninger, *Number Words and Number Symbols*, NWNS p.465.
2. Ms. 3042/2 in the Shøyen Collection, Oslo and London; see schoyencollection.com.
3. See Terese Bartholomew, *Hidden Meanings in Chinese Art*, HMCA p.255.
4. See Chee Beng Tan, *Development and Distribution of Dejiào Associations*, DDDA p.2.

5. See also “swastika,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001; “How the world loved the swastika,” bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-29644591, ret. June 2015; “swastika,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW; Steven Heller, *The Swastika: Symbol Beyond Redemption?*; “swastika,” *Wikipedia*, ret. June 2015.

ta’amei ha-miṣvot (He) (sg. *ta’am ha-miṣvah*) *Lit.* reasons (*ta’amei*) for the commandments (*ha-miṣvot*); tastes (*ta’amei*) of the commandments. The *miṣvot* are the laws and rituals given in the Bible and *Talmud* that are incumbent upon a Jew to observe correctly.

Various such lists have been compiled. Among the most popular is that of Moses Maimonides in his *Mishneh Torah*, who extracted six hundred and thirteen *miṣvot* from the *Pentateuch* (*Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers*, and *Deuteronomy*). These observances cover a wide range of beliefs, practices and behaviour, including: belief in God as One;¹ to love, fear and reverence God;² not to profane God’s name;³ to learn and to teach the *Torah*;⁴ to honour the old and wise, especially those who are knowledgeable regarding the *Torah*;⁵ to circumcise male offspring;⁶ to bind phylacteries (*tefillin*) on the head and arm;⁷ to pray to God at various times and in various ways;⁸ “to love thy neighbour as thyself,” and to observe various other commandments concerning decent human behaviour, such as not bearing a grudge or fostering hatred in one’s heart, never taking revenge, not gossiping or telling lies, not cursing others, being helpful to others, rebuking sinners, and so on.⁹

The *Pentateuch* also contains a multitude of commandments (*miṣvot*) concerning: treatment of the poor and disadvantaged; parents, marriage, divorce, sexual relations, and family life in general; clothing; business activities; farming; taxation and tithes; employees, servants, and slaves; litigation on a variety of issues; recompense for damage; details concerning observance of the Sabbath and other religious festivals; sacrifices and offerings; prohibitions against idolatry; ritual purity and impurity; special commandments for priests and nazirites; and the conduct of war.

Ta’amei ha-miṣvot involves a wordplay in which *ta’amei* means both ‘reasons’ and ‘tastes’. The kabbalists taught that the mystical reason (*ta’am*) for observing a *miṣvah* is its taste (*ta’am*) or essence, understanding of which can be gained by careful reading of the biblical text. By observing the *miṣvah*, the devotee could gain a taste of the divine sweetness and the spiritual essence inherent in it. Writings that explained the mystical meanings or interpretations of the commandments were given the generic title of *ta’amei ha-miṣvot*.

Originally, no logical justification was given for practising the *miṣvot*, since the rabbis considered it sufficient that God had ordained them in the *Torah*. If rational meanings were sought, that would undermine the authority of the Bible and the rabbis. In medieval times, however, under the influence of philosophers such as Moses Maimonides, an effort was made to find

rationales for the *mizvot*, to bring Jewish religious life into conformity with the challenges of the prevailing philosophical atmosphere of the time.

Discovering *ta'amei ha-mizvot* was a popular preoccupation with the kabbalists of the thirteenth century, and many tracts were written on the subject. The 'reasons' proposed, however, were not logical, but mystical and symbolic. The kabbalists presumed that when people performed the rituals and ceremonies commanded in the *Torah*, it had a theurgical or even magical effect on the spiritual realms by augmenting the divine power, which in turn gave protection to the Jews. For example, they believed that the commandments concerning the use of *tefillin* (phylacteries) and the use of the *lulav* (palm branch) on the holiday of *Sukkot* (Tabernacles) had a special meaning and a particular impact on the supernal powers. If these commandments were ignored, the divine Being would withdraw into Himself and the flow (*shefa*) of His nurturing power – the influence on humanity of His grace and holy spirit – would be diminished. The commandments had the power to join the soul to God, raising it towards the Divine. No action was confined to the physical world alone; every action had a corresponding impact in the higher realms, often on the interrelationship of the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) with each other.

This notion is founded on the belief that the physical world is a reflection, at a coarse material level, of the spiritual worlds above. The notion that human activity has an effect on the higher planes is related to the law of action and reaction, which has been taught, in one form or another, by mystics of all spiritual traditions. Every action, every thought, sets up vibrations that ultimately affect the entire creation, just as ripples that result from throwing a stone into a pond eventually spread across the entire pond. Everything is interrelated. The ripples or vibrations that result from an action ultimately affect the doer of the original action. This is why many mystics have taught that human experience in this world is the consequence of previous actions. The influence or effect of human action on higher levels of existence is simply the result of the law of cause and effect.

See also: **tefillin**.

1. *Deuteronomy* 6:4.
2. *Deuteronomy* 6:5, 13.
3. *Leviticus* 22:32.
4. *Deuteronomy* 6:7.
5. *Leviticus* 19:32; *Deuteronomy* 10:20.
6. *Genesis* 17:12; *Leviticus* 12:3.
7. *Deuteronomy* 6:8.
8. *Exodus* 23:25; *Deuteronomy* 6:7, 13, 8:10.
9. *Leviticus* 19:14–18.

tahajjud (A/P) *Lit.* being sleepless, sleeplessness; giving up sleep (*hujūd*); struggling to be rid of sleep; night prayer, midnight prayer, late-night prayer; a voluntary prayer offered in the middle of the night in addition to the five obligatory daily prayers; the practice of rising for prayer for a part of the night; from *hajada* (to keep a night vigil). The practice is recommended in the *Qurʾān*, as a “largesse” or bonus:

Establish worship at the going down of the sun
 until the dark of night, and at dawn:
 For the dawn prayer is ever witnessed.
 And pray in the small watches of the morning:
 a largesse for you.
 Soon your Lord will raise you to a station of praise and glory!
Qurʾān 17:78–79; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

The night prayer is often mentioned among the *ḥadīth*. It is said, for instance, that Muḥammad would always rise for the night prayer, unless he was sick.¹ He was also very keen that his followers should do the same, though they would sometimes offer excuses. According to a *ḥadīth*, said to have been related by his close companion ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who was married to the Prophet’s daughter, Fāṭimah:

One night *Allāh*’s Messenger came to me (‘Alī) and Fāṭimah, the daughter of the Prophet, and asked, “Don’t you pray (at night)?”
 I said, “O *Allāh*’s Messenger! Our souls are in the hands of *Allāh*, and if He wants us to get up He will make us get up!”
 When I said that, he left us without saying anything, and I heard that he was hitting his thigh and saying, “But man is more quarrelsome than anything.”²

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, 2:21.227; cf. HSB

Muḥammad is also reported to have said that if a person falls asleep during his night prayer, *Allāh* still grants him the benefit of it:

If a man prays in the night and sleep overcomes him during it, *Allāh* writes for him the reward of his prayer, and his sleep is *ṣadaqah* (righteousness) for him.

Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭaʾ 7:1.1, HM

Again according to a *ḥadīth*, the ‘Companions’ or close disciples of Muḥammad kept long vigils at night, a practice that still continues among the devout, especially during the month of *Ramaḍān*. It is said that the Companions kept such long vigils that their strength began to deteriorate. As a consequence, their vigils were curtailed.

Among some of the Sufis, there are indications that ‘night prayer’ was used as an oblique reference to nightly meditation. Al-Ghazālī quotes a *ḥadīth* in which Muḥammad’s grandson, Ḥasan ibn ‘Alī, was asked:

“How is it that those people are most beautiful who pray at night?”
He said: “Because they are alone with the All-merciful, who covers them with light from His light.”

Ḥadīth, in Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn 1:123, in MDI p.155

Rūmī certainly makes many references to nightly meditation. Thus, a character in one of his stories prays:

O God, do not put this servant to shame:
if I am wicked, yet do not divulge my secret.
You know, and the long nights know too,
during which I was calling You with a hundred supplications.
Though this may have no worth in people’s eyes,
in Your sight it is like a radiant lamp.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:2373–75; cf. MJR4 p.132

In one of his poems, he speaks of the spirit’s delight in the spiritual realms at the time of the “night prayer”. Here, the “sleep” of the mystic refers to the soul’s ascent into higher regions, when the body is asleep to this world:

At the night prayer (*namāz*), when the sun sinks,
the way of the senses closes,
and the way to the Unseen opens.
The angel of sleep then drives forward the spirits –
like a shepherd who watches over his flock –
to the placeless, towards the spiritual meadows.

What cities and what gardens he shows them there!
The spirit beholds a thousand marvellous forms and shapes,
when sleep excises from it the image of the world.
You might say that the spirit was always a dweller there,
for it remembers not this world, and its weariness does not increase.
Its heart so escapes from the load and burden
beneath which it trembled here,
that the cares of this world gnaw at it no longer.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 943:9951–56,

KSD2 p.229; cf. MP1 (123:1–6) p.106

Ḥāfiẓ and many other Sufis have also spoken of nightly meditation, often indirectly in terms of the longing to meet the beloved at night:

See how my heart burns! For, from the raging fire of my tears,
last night, through love's yearning,
the candle of my heart was consumed like a moth.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.35, DIH p.84; cf. DHWC (65:4) p.159

See also: **amrit velā** (8.5), **khvāb** (►4), **vigil** (8.5).

1. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, 2:21.224, 6:60.475, 6:61.506, *HSB*.
2. *Qur'ān* 18.54.

ṭahārah (A), **ṭahārat** (P) *Lit.* being pure, clean, or holy; cleanness, purity, holiness, sanctity, saintliness; purification; a purificatory act or practice; cleanliness from all unclean substances; ritual purity; outwardly, a Muslim term referring to all practices associated with ritual purity, such as ablutions; inwardly, the cleansing of the heart from all that is other than God; from the same root as *ṭahara* (to cleanse, to purge, to purify, to chasten, to be clean and pure), *ṭuhr* (cleanliness, purity, chastity), *ṭāhir* (clean, pure, chaste, modest, virtuous; one who is pure), and *muṭahhar* (pure, immaculate, that which has been purged and cleansed). The Quranic forms of the last two are *ṭahir* and *muṭahharah*.

Ṭahārah is the general term for all aspects of ritual purity and cleansing in Muslim religious law (*fiqh*). Included are the practical details of things to be avoided, such as pork, carcasses, blood, faeces, *etc.*, and the method of washing required to reinstate *ṭahārah* (ritual purity) after its loss. The test of successful cleansing is that the offending substance can no longer be tasted, smelt, or seen.

Also included in *ṭahārah* is the fitness of individuals to carry out various ritual acts. Menstruation, childbirth, sexual activity, breaking wind, defecation, urination, and various activities involving loss of control (*e.g.* quarrelling and raucous laughter), require either the greater or lesser ablutions (*ghusl* and *wuḍūʿ*) to reinstate a condition of ritual purity.

Ṭahārah is a necessary precondition for the valid performance of ritual prayer. *Ṭahārah ḥaqīqiyah* (real ritual purity) requires the elimination of all blemishes from the body, clothing, and place of dwelling or prayer. *Ṭahārah ḥukmiyah* (prescribed ritual purity) requires performance of the greater or lesser ablutions.

The practice of ritual purity has probably been carried over into Islam from Zoroastrianism and Judaism, since ritual ablutions and associated practices are common to all three religions. Some of the basic ablution practices are mentioned in the *Qur'ān*,¹ with details provided at many places among the *ḥadīth*.

The concept of maintaining purity appears in the *Qur'ān*. The Prophet is said to have come, “reciting infallible scriptures from purified (*muṭahhar*)

pages”.² It maintains that “This is indeed a glorious *Qur’ān*, safeguarded in a book, which none may touch, except the purified (*muṭahhar*).”³ It also speaks of keeping the *Ka’bah* (sacred place) pure and holy: “And keep My house clean (*tahir*), for those who circumambulate it.”⁴ The purifying effect of giving in charity is also mentioned: “Of their wealth, take alms, so that they may be purified (*yutahhiru*).”⁵

The *Qur’ān* also speaks of sending rain to purify Muḥammad and his followers after they had won a battle against the Meccans: “He sent down water from the sky to purify (*yutahhiru*) you, and remove from you the stain (*rijz*) of Satan, to strengthen your hearts, and steady your footsteps.”⁶

Just as the monks of all traditions have followed the outward rules of their particular religions, Sufis have also performed the practices of ritual purity according to the detailed rules laid out in the *ḥadīth*. Many were even more meticulous than their fellow Muslims, taking the ablutions as symbols for the purification of the soul. The process was also intended to create humility through obedience to a rule and an awareness of the need for purity of heart. Some Sufis performed the greater ablution before each prayer or before visiting their *shaykh*.⁷ Others had no hesitation in purifying themselves in icy river waters in midwinter.⁸ Shaykh Shiblī observes, “Whenever I have neglected any rule of purification (*ṭahārat*), some vain conceit has always arisen in my heart.”⁹

Hujwīrī lays out the basics of the Sufi understanding:

After faith, the first thing incumbent on everyone is purification (*ṭahārat*) and the performance of prayer, *i.e.* to cleanse the body from filth and pollution, and to wash the three members (face, hands, and feet), and to wipe the head with water as the law prescribes, or to use sand in the absence of water or in severe illness.

Purification (*ṭahārat*) is of two kinds: outer purification (*ṭahārat-i ṣāḥir*) and inner purification (*ṭahārat-i dīl*, ‘purification of the heart’). Thus, prayer requires purification of the body (*ṭahārat-i badan*) and gnosis requires purification of the heart (*ṭahārat-i dīl*). Just as, for the former, the water must be clean, so, for the latter, unification (*tawḥīd*) must be pure and belief undefiled. *Ṣūfīs* are constantly engaged in outward purification (*ṭahārat*) and inward unification. . . .

Outward and inward purification (*ṭahārat*) must go together; *e.g.* when a man washes his hands, he must wash his heart clean of worldliness; when he puts water in his mouth, he must purify his mouth from the mention of other than God; when he washes his face, he must turn away from all familiar objects and turn towards God; when he wipes his head, he must resign his affairs to God; when he washes his feet, he must not form the intention of taking his stand on anything except according to the command of God. Thus will he be doubly purified (*ṭahārat*). . . .

The *ṣūfī shaykhs* have fully discussed the true meaning of purification (*ṭahārat*), and have instructed their disciples not to cease from purifying (*ṭahārat*) themselves both outwardly and inwardly. He who would serve God must purify (*ṭahārat*) himself outwardly with water, and he who would come nigh unto God must purify (*ṭahārat*) himself inwardly with repentance.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XVIII, KMM pp.374–76, 378; cf. KM pp.291–92, 294

Maybudī analyses outer and inner purification into three categories:

Outer purification (*ṭahārat-i ṣāḥir*) is of three kinds: that from contamination, from ritual impurity, and from bodily matter, such as nails, hair, dirt, and so forth.

Inner purification (*ṭahārat-i bāṭin*) is also of three kinds, that of the body from sin, such as slander, falsehood, and eating prohibited foods; that of the heart, from what is immoral; and that of the innermost consciousness, from that which is other than God.

Pīr-i Ṭarīqat, in Kashf al-Asrār, KA3 p.46, in SSE3 p.78

When true purification of the heart has been accomplished, says Rūzbihān, the person radiates the purity and light of God:

When purity (*quds*) permeates the foundations of a devotee's nature, it affects his body and senses. Spiritual purification (*ṭahārat al-ma'na*) then radiates throughout his being, outwardly and inwardly. Whoever sees him, notices the majesty of God's purity (*quds Allāh*) in him, for he has become the mirror of God in the world.

(The *Qur'ān* says: "God loves those that turn to Him, and strive to keep themselves clean (*mutaṭahhir*)."¹⁰ The Prophet said, "Purification (*naẓāfah*) is a part of faith."¹¹

The gnostic (al-Ḥallāj) said, "Purification (*ṭahārah*) is the emergence of the innermost consciousness from the darkness of stray thoughts, so that it joins the light of God's Attributes."

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 9:23, MARB p.177; cf. in SSE3 p.75

For the mystic, true purification comes from intense love and longing:

If the lover does not make his ablutions (*ṭahārat*)
in the blood of his heart,
the arbiter of love will not accept his prayers as valid.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.138, DIH p.243; cf. DHWC (298:4) p.519

See also: **ghusl**, **iḥrām**, **wuḍū'**.

1. *Qur'ān* 4:43, 5:6.
2. *Qur'ān* 98:2; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK.
3. *Qur'ān* 56:77–79, KPA.
4. *Qur'ān* 22:26; cf. KPA.
5. *Qur'ān* 9:103; cf. KPA, MGK.
6. *Qur'ān* 8:11; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK.
7. Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-Uns*, NUJ p.292, in MDI p.149.
8. See Mīr 'Alī Shīr Qānī, *Tuḥfat al-Kirām*, TKSQ p.386, in MDI p.149.
9. Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XVIII, KMM p.377, KM p.293.
10. *Qur'ān* 2:222; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK.
11. *Ḥadīth*, in CIT6 p.483, in SSE3 p.75.

takbīr (A/P) *Lit.* a proclamation of greatness; one or more repetitions of the expression *Allāhu akbar* or *Allāh akbar* (God is greatest, God is most great, God is great); from the root *k-b-r* (great), and related to *kabara* (to declare greatness, to magnify), *kabīr* (great), and *akbar* (greatest); a refrain repeated in the call to prayer (*adhān*), as well as at certain points during Muslim prayers (*ṣalāh*), in the belief that by so doing the worshipper enters a state of consecration; also repeated at funerals and on other religious occasions; also as *takbīr al-iḥrām* (sacred proclamation of greatness), *takbīr al-qiyām* (standing proclamation of greatness) and *takbīr al-qu'ud* (sitting proclamation of greatness), which are repeated while standing or sitting; one of a number of refrains repeated continuously by Muslims as a part of the practice of *dhikr* (remembrance); mystically, the unspoken expression of love and wonder as the soul traverses the inner realms to the divine Essence. Describing his mystical transport and his experience of the divine omnipresence, al-Niffārī writes metaphorically:

Everything spoke saying, “*Allāhu akbar!*”

Al-Niffārī, Kitāb al-Mawāqif 44, in EIM p.289

Hujwīrī quotes Abū Sulaymān Dā'ūd ibn Nuṣayr al-Ṭā'ī who is said to have counselled a disciple to pronounce the funeral *takbīr* over (*i.e.* bid farewell to) the next world in his quest for God, who lies beyond both this world and the next:

If you desire (spiritual) welfare, bid farewell to this world;
And if you desire grace (*karāmat*),
pronounce the *takbīr* over the next world.

Abū Sulaymān Dā'ūd ibn Nuṣayr al-Ṭā'ī, in *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* XI,

KMM p.136; cf. KM p.109

Speaking of his master, Shams-i Tabrīz, Rūmī says:

O beloved, spiritual beauty is very fair and glorious,
 but your beauty and loveliness is another thing. . . .
 I stand open-mouthed in veneration of that Beauty:
 every moment, “God is most great (*Allāhu akbar*)”
 is on the lips of my heart.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz, 449:4725, 4728, *KSD1* p.260, *SDST* (XI) pp.42–43

According to Muslim custom, a slaughterer is also required to say the *takbīr* over an animal he is about to kill. Referring to the practice, Rūmī says that it is the *nafs* (lower mind) that “ought to be killed” by spiritual practice and the love of God. He is giving an allegorical slant to the biblical story that relates how Abraham has a vision of God in which God commands him, as a test of his obedience to the divine will, to sacrifice his son:

O *imām*, the meaning of the *takbīr* is this:
 “We have become a sacrifice, O God, before You.”
 At the moment of slaughtering, you say *Allāhu akbar*:
 do even so in slaughtering the lower mind (*nafs*),
 which ought to be killed.
 The body is like Ismā‘īl, and the spirit like Abraham:
 the spirit has pronounced the *takbīr* over the noble body.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī III:2143–45, *MJR4* pp.119–20

In the Bible, the son to be sacrificed is named as Isaac.¹ In the *Qur’ān*, however, which Rūmī is following, the son is left unnamed.² In Islam, this son is presumed to have been Ishmael. In the biblical story, Ishmael (son of Abraham and the concubine Hagar) and his mother are turned out into the desert lest Ishmael should become a rival heir to Isaac (the legitimate son of Abraham and his wife Sarah). While Isaac goes on to become the father of Jacob (Israel), the founding father of the Israelites, Ishmael is traditionally believed to have become the founder of the desert Arabs and a forefather of Muḥammad.

See also: **namāz**, **nīyah**, **rak‘ah**.

1. *Genesis* 22:1–14.
2. *Qur’ān* 37:102.

takuhatsu (J) *Lit.* carrying (*taku*) a bowl (*hatsu*); an alms-begging round; also, in a modern *Zen* monastery or temple, the time when monks take their eating bowls to the canteen to eat.

Zen monks and nuns do not go out begging every day, but generally make an alms-collecting round on only a few days in a month. A group of ten or fifteen will walk the streets in single file. Sometimes, they call out the word, “*Hō! (Dharma!)*.” Sometimes, they ring bells or chant *sūtras* to announce their presence. When lay Buddhists open their doors, both parties bow to each other, and people offer donations, usually of money or uncooked rice. The money goes into the bowl and the rice into a bag carried by the monks for that purpose.

See also: **piṇḍapātra**.

tāṇḍava nṛitya (S/H) *Lit.* dance (*nṛitya*) with violent gesticulation (*tāṇḍava*); an energetic, frightening and forceful Indian dance symbolizing *Shiva*’s cosmic dance of destruction at the dissolution (*pralaya*) of the universe. Both *tāṇḍava* and *nṛitya* imply dancing with extreme gesticulations. The dance represents the ordered movement of the universe and the two alternating phases of the cosmic cycle: its emanation and evolution, followed by its dissolution and re-integration back into the all-pervading Spirit (*Purusha*), and its subsequent re-emanation. The dance thus represents the illusory world of *māyā* (illusion). Mythologically, the scene of this dance was said to have been Chidambaram in South India.

tapas (S), **tapa** (Pa), **tap** (H/Pu), **tāp** (Pu), **dka’ thub** (T), **kūxíng** (C), **kugyō** (J) *Lit.* fire, warmth, heat, burning, fever; fervour, ardour; burning concentration, deep absorption; self-control, self-discipline; penance, austerity, asceticism (*dka’ thub*, *kūxíng*, *kugyō*); mortification or stringency regarding one’s behaviour; self-discipline of the body, speech, and mind; the practice of devout austerities; self-discipline by voluntary submission to suffering such as heat, cold, hunger, thirst, physical discomfort, and so on.

The practice of *tapas* is called *tapasyā*, and one who performs *tapas* is a *tapasvī* or a *tapī*. *Tapas*, as the observance of austerities and mortification of the body, is embraced by the Hindu and Jain traditions, but is rejected by Buddhism. According to the traditional story, before his enlightenment, the Buddha himself performed austerities for some time before rejecting such practices.

Over time, *tapas* has developed a spread of meaning. Its earliest mention is probably in the *Ṛig Veda*, in the *Nāsadīya Sūkta*, where it is said that the self-sustaining One – who existed “in void”, was wrapped in nothingness, and breathed “without breath” – first manifested Himself by the power of *tapas* (fire, fervour, absorption). By this means, the creation came into being:

Neither being nor Non-being existed then;
 Neither was there air, nor the heavens beyond.
 What breathed? Where? In whose care?
 Was water there, unfathomably deep?

There was neither death nor immortality then;
 Of night and day, there was no sign.
 The One breathed, without breath,
 by Its own impulse:
 Besides It, nothing else existed.

Darkness was wrapped in darkness then:
 all was one unruffled sea.
 Then the One, hidden in void, stirred, came forth:
 through fervour (*tapas*), came to be.

A desire came upon the One in the beginning:
 the primal seed of mind.

Ṛig Veda, Nāsadīya Sūkta 10:129.1–4

Here, it is love, which is the essential attribute of the Divine, that provides the fervour, energy, and burning concentration or absorption – the heat or fire – by which the creation comes into being. According to Raimundo Panikkar:

Tapas is the primordial fervour, the original fire, the supreme concentration, the ultimate energy, the creative force that initiates the whole cosmic movement. . . . This love or desire cannot be a yearning toward any object; it is the concentration upon the Self, and is related to *tapas*.

Raimundo Panikkar, Vedic Experience, VE pp.52–53

It is from *tapas*, the divine fire and fervour, repeats the *Ṛig Veda*, that the creation has come into being:

From blazing ardour (*tapas*),
 cosmic order (*ṛita*) came, and Truth (*Satya*);
 From thence was born the obscure night;
 From thence the ocean with its billowing waves.
 From ocean with its waves was born the year
 which marshals the succession of nights and days,
 controlling everything that blinks the eye.

Ṛig Veda 10:190.1–2, VE p.60

As the *Taittirīya Upanishad* puts it:

He (the Supreme) desired, “May I become many; let Me procreate Myself.” So He performed *tapas*. And having performed *tapas*, He projected all this – whatever there is that exists.

Taittirīya Upanishad 2:6.1

Having “performed *tapas*” refers again to the inward focus of intensity, to divine fervour and absorption, to divine love wishing to manifest itself – in whatever way this is expressed words cannot communicate the nature of the divine act of creation.

According to the creation myth told in the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad*, the Supreme brought everything into being, first by creating a self (mind) for Himself, and then by worshipping Himself through the self He had created. It was by this worship of Himself that water, earth, fire, air and so on came into being. Further into the creative process, “He rested Himself, and He practised *tapas*,” thereby generating the energy for further creation.¹ At another place, the same *Upanishad* says that the “Father” created everything by “wisdom and *tapas*”.²

Referring to the same myth, the *Prashna Upanishad* relates that since *Prajāpati* (Lord of creatures) “desired offspring”, therefore, “he practised *tapas*.”³ The *Maitrī Upanishad* repeats that the world came into being through the ‘utterance’ of the Real, after *Prajāpati* had practised *tapas*:

Verily, in the beginning, all this was unuttered. When He, the Real, *Prajāpati* (Lord of creation), performed austerity (*tapas*), he uttered “*bhuḥ, bhuvaḥ, svar* (earth, atmosphere, sky)”. This world-form is, indeed, *Prajāpati*’s grossest form.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:6

Hiraṇyagarbha or *Brahmā*, the creator deity out of whom the rest of creation has been formed, is said to have been “born of old from *tapas*” – the *tapas* of the Supreme.⁴ The *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* asserts that *tapas* is the same as mystical knowledge or gnosis (*jñāna*):

The One who is all-knowing and all-wise,
whose *tapas* consists of knowledge (*jñāna*),
from Him are born *Brahmā*, name, form, and food.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1:1.9

It is common in Vedic mythology for the creation or the attainment of something new or significant to be ascribed to the practice of *tapas*. The *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, for instance, repeats a well-known refrain – that the gods attained divinity through *tapas*.⁵ Likewise, the *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad*:

In the beginning, the gods attained godhood by *tapas*. By *tapas*, seers gradually attained heaven.⁶

Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad 79:3; cf. *MUSV* pp.326–27

Even when applied to human existence, *tapas* still implies intense ardour, concentration, and absorption. These relate entirely to the inward state, and it must have been a natural step for the meaning of the term to have encompassed both the internal self-discipline required for such concentrated contemplation and meditation, as well as the associated self-control regarding the senses and external life. From here, it would have been only a short step for *tapas* to have become identified with more extreme forms of austerity and personal self-torture. It is a mistake, therefore, to understand *tapas* to refer entirely to external forms of self-discipline, nor – in many contexts – does this make sense.

In early Indian literature, then, *tapas* generally refers either to the fervour and absorption of the Divine by which the creation has come into being, or to the concentration, absorption and self-control required to realize the Divine. It may also refer to external aspects of self-discipline. It is a broad-based term referring to both the inner and outer aspects of spiritual life. More than a few yogic commentators have also expressed this opinion. Swami Shivananda writes:

Concentration of the mind is the highest *tapas*, because withdrawing the mind and the senses from the external objects and concentrating it on the *Ātman* (supreme Self) is the most difficult form of austerity.

Swami Shivananda, Principal Upanishads, PUSS p.224

This spectrum of meaning becomes clear from the many instances of its use, and not infrequently it is difficult to be sure of the precise meaning the original author had in mind. While extolling *tapas*, for example, Manu says that through *tapas* alone can one accomplish what is hard to achieve or what is beyond one's reach, and that the gods only accept the worship of someone who has purified himself through *tapas*.⁷ Likewise, the *Matsya Purāṇa*:

Through *tapas*, desires are fulfilled; there is nothing that cannot be accomplished through *tapas*. . . . Nothing can excel *tapas*. By means of it, one attains the Supreme. By its power, all sin is eradicated, and one enjoys the company of the gods.

Matsya Purāṇa 254:289; cf. in *TUSS* p.165

In the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the sage Rishabha counsels his sons:

Dear children, having taken a human birth you ought to engage yourself in holy *tapas*, by which your mind will become pure, and you will

obtain the supreme bliss of *Brahman*. Having received a human birth, it is not befitting to abandon oneself piggishly to sense enjoyments.

Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5:5.1; cf. in TUSS p.165

The same text says that ridding oneself of cravings, and focusing all the energies of mind on the divine Reality is the purest and highest form of *tapas*.⁸

In ancient times, young men would go to their teacher (*āchārya*) and remain with him until the age of twenty-four. Taking a vow of celibacy (*brahma-charya*), they conserved their creative energy, which was used for their development on the spiritual plane. When they returned to the world, they were physically and mentally strong, mature and able to deal with the demands of life. As the *Atharva Veda* says, “He satisfies the *āchārya* by *tapas*.”⁹

It is said that *tapas* opens the way to all power. According to Manu, sins (*kilbisha*) are destroyed by practising *tapas*.¹⁰ It is by *tapas* that the *rishis* of ancient times acquired an almost divine status. According to mythology, gods like *Indra* were afraid of those who performed *tapas*, and felt insecure. They tried their best to disturb the *tapas* of the *rishis* by sending *apsaras* (heavenly nymphs) to inflame desire in their minds, thereby distracting them from their practice.

There are places, however, where *tapas* more clearly refers to external practices:

Continence, truthfulness, bathing three times a day, standing in wet clothes, sleeping on the ground, and various food-restrictions constitute *tapas*.

Gautama, Institutes of the Sacred Law 19:15; cf. SBE2 p.277

Here, many spiritual practitioners would regard most of the ‘austerities’ recommended by Gautama as a normal part of spiritual life. Even sleeping on a hard surface is not unusual, although standing in wet clothes is perhaps verging on the extreme, though only if the weather is cold. Which of several ancient Gautamas was the one who wrote these aphorisms is uncertain.

Likewise, the *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* says that the *brāhmaṇs* seek to know “the great unborn Self . . . by the study of the *Vedas*, by sacrifices, by gifts, by *tapas*, and by fasting”.¹¹ Since the reference here is to the priests, *tapas* seems more likely to refer to external practices, perhaps together with meditation, but the precise meaning remains uncertain.

The *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad*, on the other hand, maintains that the supreme Self (*Ātman*) is both mystic knowledge of Itself, as well as the means by which this knowledge is attained – *tapas*. Here, the meaning is more likely to be intense inner concentration or meditation:

Like oil (is hidden) in sesame seeds, butter in milk,
water in (dry) river beds, and fire in wood –

So is the (supreme) Self realized within the self (*ātmā*)
 by one who seeks It by truth and *tapas*.
 The Self that is all-pervading like butter in milk,
 and is the source of Self-knowledge and *tapas* –
 That is the *Brahman* taught by the *Upanishad*.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 1:15–16

Tapas and the grace of God are also the means by which the sage Shvetāshvatara is said to have obtained mystical awareness. Again, meditation seems a more likely meaning, given the general trend of this *Upanishad*:

By the power of *tapas* and the grace of God, the wise Shvetāshvatara
 spoke correctly to the advanced ascetics,
 about *Brahman*, the Supreme, the Pure,
 what is pleasing to the company (*saṃgha*) of seers (*ṛishi*).

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 6:21; cf. PU p.749

In the *Kena Upanishad*, *tapas* is a primary means by which mystic teaching is understood:

“Sir, tell me the mystic teaching (*upanishad*)!” ...
 “Inner concentration (*tapas*), self-control (*dama*) and action
 (*karma*) are its foundation. The *Vedas* are all its limbs. Truth (*satya*)
 is its dwelling.”

Kena Upanishad 4:7

In the *Prashna Upanishad*, a group of spiritual seekers asked the sage Pippalāda for teaching concerning *Brahman*. But Pippalāda knew that such things can only be understood after following the spiritual path for some time. Here, *tapas* is again meditation and internal self-discipline:

To them that seer (*ṛishi*) said: “Verily, live with me for another year
 with *tapas*, chastity and faith. Then you may ask us questions accord-
 ing to your desire and, if I know, I will surely tell you all.”

Prashna Upanishad 1:2

In the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali (c.C2nd BCE), *tapas* is prescribed as one of the prerequisites for the practice of *yoga*:

Tapas, self-study and resignation to God
 are essential for the practice of *yoga*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:1

The essential observances (*niyamas*) are purity, contentment, *tapas*, self-study and resignation to God.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:32

Likewise in the *Maitrī Upanishad*:

By knowledge (*vidyā*), by self-discipline (*tapas*), by meditation (*chintā*) is *Brahman* apprehended. He becomes one who goes beyond *Brahmā*, even to the state of supreme divinity above the gods. He obtains a happiness, undecaying, unmeasured, and free from sickness – he who knows this worships *Brahman* by means of these three. Then, freed from those things by which he was previously filled and overcome, this chariot rider attains complete union with the Self (*Ātman*).

Maitrī Upanishad 4:4; cf. TPU pp.421–22

A similar meaning is implied in the *Taittirīya Upanishad*, when Bhṛigu, son of the sage Varuṇa, approaches his father and asks in a serially repetitive dialogue, “Venerable Sir, teach me about *Brahman*.” His father replies that everything bears witness to the existence of *Brahman* and is a part of *Brahman*, but to realize *Brahman*:

“Seek to know *Brahman* by means of *tapas*:

Brahman is *tapas*.”

And he (Bhṛigu) practised *tapas*.

Taittirīya Upanishad 3:1–5

Here again, *tapas* seems most likely to refer to intense inner concentration, meditation and devotion, together with the discipline of spiritual life.

Similarly, in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, *tapas* is the means to spiritual realization:

The Self (*Ātman*) is attained by truth (*satya*), inner absorption (*tapas*), right knowledge (*jñāna*), and constant chastity (*brahmacharya*).

Within this very body, the sinless, self-controlled ones
behold Him who is pure and made of light.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 3:1.5

Deluded men, regarding sacrifices and works of merit
as most important, know no other good.

Having enjoyed a high place in heaven won by their good deeds,
they once again enter this world or a yet lower one.

But those who live in the forest, leading lives of *tapas* and faith –
 peaceful, wise, and keeping the mendicant's vow –
 Freed from all impurity, pass through the door of the sun (*sūrya-dvāra*),
 to where the immortal, imperishable Being (*Purusha*) dwells.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1:2.10–11

It is also clear, however, that an understanding of *tapas* as a more extreme form of austerity was prevalent at that time – something that the author of the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* does not recommend:

The Self (*Ātman*) is not attained by instruction,
 nor by intellect, nor by much learning.
 It is gained by him whom the Self chooses:
 to such a one the Self reveals Its own nature.

The Self is not gained by those who lack fortitude,
 nor by the heedless, nor by those with a false notion of *tapas*.
 But wise men who strive with vigour, heedfulness and propriety,
 attain union with *Brahman*.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 3:2.3–4

The writer of the *Paingala Upanishad* is likewise aware that *tapas* could refer to extreme forms of austerity:

Though a man may perform *tapas* standing on one leg for a thousand years, it will not be equal to one-sixteenth part of (the results of) deep contemplation (*dhyāna-yoga*).

Paingala Upanishad 4:15, TMU p.41

Again, in the books of Hindu religious lore, the *Manu Smṛiti* speaks of *tapas* as the austerities or penance prescribed for the propitiation of sins:¹²

A man who omits a prescribed act, or performs a blameable act, or cleaves to sensual enjoyments, must perform a penance (*tapas*).

Sages prescribe a penance (*tapas*) for a sin unintentionally committed; some declare, on the evidence of the revealed texts, (that it may be performed) even for an intentional (offence).

A sin unintentionally committed is expiated by the recitation of Vedic texts, but that which (men) in their folly commit intentionally, by various (special) penances (*tapas*).

Manu Smṛiti 11:44–46, SBE25 p.439

It seems clear, then, that *tapas* encompasses a significant spread of meaning, from rigorous external austerities to an intense fervour and inner concentration

in meditation. Even as external austerities *tapas* does not imply a passive condition, but an active employment of difficult means for obtaining spiritual enlightenment and power. The true yogic ascetic is not an idler, doing nothing, waiting for realization to overtake him. He is intensely focused internally upon his spiritual goal. His life is one of constant striving, of unremitting and unsparing effort, of infinite pains willingly embraced to attain the end. This is the internal implication of *tapas*.

Extreme *tapasyā*, as external physical austerities, requires an almost unbelievable degree of perseverance and willpower. Some *tapasvīs* lived in the jungle, subsisting on roots and fruit. Some learnt to sit on hot ashes, or to lie on nails fixed in the ground. Some remained standing with one arm raised, keeping it in that position until it became practically dry and lifeless. Some sat in cold water for long periods. Others sat under the fierce summer sun with fires around them on all four sides. In order to bear the pain and hardship throughout these austerities, the mind was generally focused upon the repetition of a *mantra*.

By thus tormenting the body, the ascetic hoped to achieve victory of the spirit over the flesh. Although by such rigorous practices, the willpower may be strengthened, and some sort of training be given to the mind, yet the enormous sacrifice made and the strenuous effort put in are altogether out of proportion to the little fruit that is reaped.

As mortification of the physical being, *tapasyā* is deemed a good action, believed to earn great merit and bring extensive reward after death. The earning of religious or spiritual merit (*punya*) with the hope of a subsequent reward is a significant feature of Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain religious thought.

After death, *tapasyā* may lead the soul to *svarga* (heaven) and permit enjoyment of that realm for a certain period. But it cannot give true knowledge of Reality, nor take the soul to the realms of pure spirituality, beyond good and evil, and beyond all action and desire.

Nevertheless, the general opinion expressed in ancient texts is that extreme ascetic practices are not to be recommended. In the *Yoga-Vāsishṭha*, the sage Vasishṭha tells Rāma:

Austerities (*tapas*), charity (*dāna*) and observance of religious vows (*vrata*) do not lead to the realization of the Lord; only the company of holy men and the study of true scriptures are helpful, as they dispel ignorance and delusion. When one is convinced that this Self alone is real, one goes beyond sorrow on the path of liberation.

Yoga-Vāsishṭha 3:6.4–6, VYV p.45

The *Bhagavad Gītā* is also clear:

Vain, conceited and moved by powerful passions and attachments, they perform various rigorous austerities (*tapas*), contrary to

scriptural injunctions. Thus do these senseless men torture their own bodies, and Me dwelling within them. Know such persons to be of demonic nature.

Bhagavad Gītā 17:5–6; cf. BGT

Instead, the *Bhagavad Gītā* advocates *tapas* as self-discipline of a moderate nature, something that is a natural part of a spiritual life:

Service of gods, holy men, teachers, parents and wise men, together with observance of cleanliness, uprightness, celibacy, and non-injury – these constitute austerities (*tapas*) of the body.

Speaking only words that are inoffensive, true, pleasant and beneficial, together with regular reading of the scriptures, constitutes austerity (*tapas*) of speech.

Serenity of mind, gentleness, moderation in speech, self-control, and purity of heart – this is called austerity (*tapas*) of the mind.

Bhagavad Gītā 17:14–16; cf. BGT

The way *tapas* is practised is also of significance. *Sattva* is the balanced way; *rajas* is the extroverted way; *tamas* is the way of self-indulgence:

This threefold austerity (*tapas*), performed with the highest faith by men who are not motivated by expectations of reward and who are established in mental equipoise, is declared to be of the nature of *sattva*.

The austerity (*tapas*) that is performed with much show and ostentation, intent on gaining recognition, praise and adoration from others as a pious man, is said to be of the nature of *rajas*. It is unreliable, leading to no permanent result.

Austerity (*tapas*) performed as a kind of self-torture, prompted by perverse notions or for the destruction of another, is said to be of the nature of *tamas*.

Bhagavad Gītā 17:17–19; cf. BGT

Therefore, the *Gītā* recommends a life of devotion, generosity, and self-discipline:

Focusing their attention on That (*Brahman*), seekers of liberation should practise various forms of worship (*yajña*), austerity (*tapas*) and charity (*dāna*), without any desire for their fruits. . . .

Deeds such as worship (*yajña*), charity (*dāna*) and austerity (*tapas*) should not be abandoned. They should be performed; for worship, charity and austerity (*tapas*) are indeed purifying for the wise. . . .

Serenity, control of the senses, austerity (*tapas*), purity, straightforwardness, knowledge, insight, and faith in the supreme Being – these are a *brāhmaṇ*'s, duties born of his own nature.

Bhagavad Gītā 17:25; 18:5, 42; cf. BGT

Together with mystical experience and surrender to the Divine, these will lead a seeker to God:

Free from passion, fear and anger, ever absorbed in the thought of Me, ever dependent on Me – many have attained to My state, being purified by the fire of knowledge (*jñāna*) and *tapas*.

Bhagavad Gītā 4:10; cf. BGT

The intention behind the performance of austerities is that the mind may become pure; that lust, anger, attachment, greed and egotism may be removed, and realization of God attained. Mystics, however, point out that austerities are simply punishing the body for the errors of the mind, and do not lead to purity of the mind, nor to withdrawal of the attention from the body. Rather, they are apt to focus attention on the body.

In the teaching of later Indian saints, no importance is attached to austerities that cause pain to the body, since the inner fires of the mind are not removed by these means. By the time these saints were writing, *tapas* or *tap* had come to refer almost entirely to extreme practices:

Where do you seek me, my friend,
 when I am so near to you?
 I am neither in pilgrimage places (*tīrth*),
 nor in idols nor solitary living!
 I am neither in the temple (*mandir*) nor the mosque (*masjid*),
 neither *Ka'bah* nor Kailāsh!
 I am neither in recitation (*jap*) nor austerities (*tap*),
 neither rites nor fasting!
 I dwell not in rituals (*kriyā karm*),
 nor in *yoga* or renunciation (*sanyās*).
 I am neither in the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy),
 nor in the creation (*brahmāṇḍ*) or heaven (*ākāśh*)!
 Nor am I in inaccessible caves,
 but in the life breath of the living!
 If you seek Me sincerely,
 you will find Me in the twinkling of an eye!
 Says Kabīr, listen dear brothers and holy ones,
 I tell you this in good faith.

Kabīr, Shabdāvālī, KSSI (6) pp.90–91,

SKSM (266) pp.111–12; cf. in *SSI* pp.168–69

No one but *Rām* can rid us of our sins and sorrows!
 My mind worships the lotus feet of that blissful Lord!
 Pilgrimage (*tīrth*), fasting (*vrāt*), austerity (*tap*),
 chanting (*jap*), sacrifices (*yag*), *yoga*, recitation of *mantras*,
 religious observances (*dharam karam*) and so on,
 will not bring about liberation (*mukti*)!
 Mother, father, wife, children – all are destined to die!
 So discard all illusions of the blind mind!
 Prostrate at the feet of the Lord!
 Says Kṛishṇa's servant, Shankara:
 relinquish sensual desires!

Shankaradeva, Nāhi nāhi rāmayā bine; cf. in SSI9 pp.126–27

The practice that truly liberates the soul is that of contact with the divine Word (*Shabd*). Whatever benefit accrues from other practices automatically arises from listening to the *Shabd* within:

What good are chanting (*jap*), penance (*tap*),
 or self-mortification (*sanjam*)?
 What good are fasting (*barāt*) or cleansing baths (*isnān*),
 unless you know the way to worship the Lord God
 with loving devotion?

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 337, AGK

Karam dharam (religious observances),
such (purification), *sanjam* (self-mortification), *jap* (chanting),
tap (austerities), and *tīrath* (pilgrimage) –
 All these abide in the *Shabd*.
 O Nānak, united in union with the true *guru* (*satgur*),
 suffering, sin and death run away.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1332, AGK

Tirath (pilgrimages), *tap* (austerities),
 compassion, and *dān* (charity) –
 These, by themselves, bring only an iota of merit.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 4, AGK

Tapas in Jainism

Tapas is an integral aspect of Jain philosophy and practice. It is one of the ten virtues (*dharmas*), the five codes of conduct (*āchāras*), the six duties (*āvashyakas*) incumbent upon mendicant monks, and the six duties (*karmas*) recommended for laypeople by some *Digambara āchāryas*¹³ as a replacement for the *āvashyakas*.

According to Jain doctrine, the soul is held captive in the body and in the world by an accumulation of karmic matter that has built up over many life-times. Any kind of karmic matter, good or bad, results in bondage. Liberation (*moksha*) is attained when all karmic matter has been destroyed, and the soul has been freed. One of the primary means of destroying karmic matter is believed to be *tapas*. The gradual removal of karmic matter is known as *nirjarā* (wearing down), while stopping the flow of further karmic matter into the soul is called *saṃvara* (stopping). *Tapas* is regarded as an essential part of the process of *nirjarā*. Whatever other benefits may accrue, it is understood that karmic matter is destroyed through the practice of austerities.

Twelve primary categories of *tapas* are identified – six external (*bāhya-tapas* or *dravya-tapas*) and six internal (*abhyantara-tapas*, *antaranga-tapas*, or *bhāva-tapas*), although there are variations in the performance of the practices, depending upon whether one is a mendicant or layperson.

The six external austerities, intended to gain control over the body, are:

1. *Anashana*. *Lit.* not eating (*an-ashana*); fasting; renunciation of food for a shorter or longer period. The vow of fasting in order to gain control over desires and the senses, so that meditation and study of the scriptures are not disturbed, is known as *anashana-vrata* (vow of fasting). Among the laity, *anashana* is more commonly practised by women than by men. *Anashana* covers either a specified period from one up to a maximum of 180 days, or until death. The vow of fasting until death when the end of life draws near, known as *sallekhanā*, is peculiar to the Jain tradition. The term more commonly used for fasting in a Jain context is *upavāsa*.
2. *Avama-udarya*, *ūna-udarya*. *Lit.* less (*ūna*, *avama*) in the belly (*udarya*); eating less than one's appetite, both for health benefits and to exercise one's willpower; popularly known as *ūnodari*.
3. *Vṛitti-parisaṃkhyāna*. *Lit.* restricted numbering (*parisaṃkhyāna*) practice (*vṛitti*); also called *vṛitti-saṃkshēpa* (restricting practice); eating within the limits of personally predetermined restrictions, such as the timing of meals, which items of food can be eaten, the number of items eaten, how the food is prepared, and so on; in the case of a mendicant, the taking of a secret, mental vow to accept food from a householder only if those conditions are fulfilled. The purpose is to develop willpower and detachment from sense pleasures.
4. *Rasa-parityāga*. *Lit.* renouncing (*parityāga*) taste (*rasa*); abstinence from sweet and fatty foods. This may be done in a variety of ways, for example by eating bland food without oil, butter, milk, curd, spices, sugar, and so on. The intention is to conquer one's desire for and attachment to tasty foods.

5. *Vivikta-shayyāsana*. *Lit.* secluded (*vivikta*) sitting or lying (*shayyāsana*); also called *samlīnatā* (seclusion); living in a secluded place, devoid of insects or other living organisms that could disturb one's peace of mind or self-control; also, sleeping alone to avoid carnal temptation.
6. *Kāya-klesha*. *Lit.* body (*kāya*) affliction (*klesha*); mortification of the body by standing in the sun, living under a tree, sleeping in the open during the winter cold, accustoming the body to various *yoga* postures, paying no attention to one's physical appearance, *etc.* The intention is to develop the body's powers of endurance, and make it fit for spiritual life.

For the majority of Jains, external *tapas* is restricted to fasting or control of one's food intake in various ways.

The six internal austerities, intended to increase control over the mind, are:

1. *Prāyashchitta*. *Chitta* means 'mind' or 'thought', but *prāyash* is of uncertain etymology; repentance, remorse and confession of wrongdoing (either to oneself or to a spiritual guide), with the intention of increasing self-knowledge and ridding oneself of negative tendencies; an act or rite intended to destroy or to make amends for sin; penance. *Prāyashchitta* is a term encompassing a number of rites and practices, including *pratikramaṇa* (a rite of confession, admission of and repentance for one's faults), *ālochanā* (confession to one's spiritual preceptor), *chheda* (correction by reducing the reckoned period of the offender's monkhood by a day, fortnight, month or year, depending upon the gravity of the offence), and the acceptance of various other corrective measures such as the practice of various austerities.
2. *Vinaya*. *Lit.* modesty, humility, submission, kindness, decency, courtesy, civility, respect; absence of ego; an essential aspect of Jainism, indicating the correct attitude towards faith, knowledge, conduct, body, mind, speech and reverence to others, especially one's superiors as a monk or nun.
3. *Vaiyāvṛittyā*. *Lit.* a commission, something entrusted; selfless service; rendering service by way of food, clothing, medicine and so on, to Jain monks and nuns, especially to those who are aged, sick, or infirm.
4. *Svādhyāya*. *Lit.* recitation; studying, memorizing, and expounding the scriptures; for inspiration, and for developing understanding and concentration. *Svādhyāya* also refers to self-study or introspection, with a view to deepening self-awareness, fostering good qualities, and eliminating the bad.

5. *Vyutsarga*. *Lit.* renunciation, resignation; relinquishing bodily attachment; ridding oneself of the belief that the body is 'mine'; also called *kāyotsarga* (abandonment of the body, *i.e.* meditation).
6. *Dhyāna*. *Lit.* meditation, in order to control the waves of the mind.

In all of these twelve categories, in keeping with the nature of Jain philosophy, Jain systematizers have detailed further divisions and subdivisions; nor are the various sources always in agreement. Thus, *svādhyāya* is also the fourth of the six daily *karmas* (duties); *vinaya* and *vaiyāvṛittyā* together constitute *bhakti*, which is one of the five *bhūṣaṇas* (adornments, excellencies) of *samyaktva* (perfection); and *vaiyāvṛittyā-vrata* (vow of devoted service) is sometimes used synonymously with *dāna-vrata* (vow of charity).

Early Jain authorities do not always support austerity, especially in the absence of meditation. As Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE) writes:

If one performs austerities (*tapas*) or observes vows (*vrata*) without fixed contemplation on the highest Truth (*Paramārtha*), the all-knowing call that childish austerity (*bāla-tapa*) and childish vow (*bāla-vrata*).

Those who are ignorant of the highest Truth (*Paramārtha*) lack correct understanding, despite their observance of vows (*vrata*), restraints (*yamas*), rules of conduct (*śīla*), and the practice of austerities (*tapas*).

Kundakunda, Samayasāra 4:152–53; cf. AKKS pp.315–16

Indeed, as in early Vedic texts, *tapas* is sometimes described in Jain texts more as inner self-discipline than as external restraint:

Truthfulness indeed is *tapas*:

in truthfulness resides self-restraint and all other virtues.

Just as fish can live only in the sea,

so do all other virtues reside in truthfulness alone.

Āchārya Shivārya, Bhagavatī Ārāḍhanā 842; cf. in JSJW

Tapas in Buddhism

The Pali texts indicate that a wide variety of ascetic practices were prevalent in the time of the Buddha among groups such as the *Ājīvikas* and the Jains. According to the traditional history, the Buddha himself tried the way of extreme asceticism before adopting the 'Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*)' that lead him to enlightenment. In the *Mahāsaccaka Sutta* in the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha describes the effect of some of the practices in which he engaged in order to try and control his mind. These include certain *bandhas*

(locks) and breath control exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) of *haṭha yoga*, although he does not use these terms:

But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness (*sati*) was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.242–43, MDBB p.337

He also tried extreme fasting, taking only a tiny amount of food, concerning which he is famously reported to have said:

My body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little my limbs became like the jointed segments of withered creepers or bamboo stems, . . . my backside became like a camel's hoof, . . . the projections on my spine stood out like corded beads, . . . my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy rafters of an old roofless barn, . . . the gleam of my eyes sank far down in their sockets, looking like the gleam of water that has sunk far down in a deep well, . . . my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun, . . . and my belly skin adhered to my backbone. Thus if I touched my belly skin I encountered my backbone and if I touched my backbone I encountered my belly skin.

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.245–46; cf. MDBB p.339

As a result, he asked himself:

But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. Could there be another path to enlightenment?

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.246, MDBB p.340

The Buddha then goes on to describe how he relinquished these methods and, rising up through the *jhānas* (levels of contemplation), he finally attained enlightenment.¹⁴

In a discourse generally regarded as the first that he delivered, the Buddha explicitly advises against extreme ascetic practices, advocating instead the Middle Way:

Bhikkhus, there are these two extremes that ought not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth from the householder's life. What are these two? There is devotion to indulgence in sensual pleasure regarding the objects of sensual desire, which is base, coarse, common, ignoble, and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification (*atta-kilamatha*), which is painful, ignoble, and unprofitable.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*. And what is that Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*)? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*.

Samyutta Nikāya 56:11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, PTS55 pp.420–21

The same perspective is evident from what is probably the oldest collection of the sayings attributed to the Buddha – the *Dhammapada*. The highest *tapa*, he observes, is “patience and forbearance”:

Patience and forbearance is the highest austerity (*tapa*).

The *buddhas* say that *nibbāna* is supreme.

Truly, he is no renunciate who harms others;

He is no contemplative (*samaṇa*) who causes grief to others.

Dhammapada 14:6

Nevertheless, according to the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha did in fact agree to the practice of certain less stringent ascetic practices,¹⁵ known in Pali commentarial literature as the thirteen *dhutangas*¹⁶ and in Sanskrit as the twelve *dhūtaguṇas*.¹⁷ He does not, however, make them compulsory. It is the desire to gain release from the body, the senses and the material concerns that occupy the mind against one’s will, drawing it away from the spiritual path, that lead to the universal response of renunciation and asceticism among spiritual seekers. There will always be those in every tradition whose nature is attracted to extremes; although mystics like the Buddha have demonstrated by their own example and experience that disciplining the body does not lead to control of the mind and senses, in the absence of a more positive spiritual practice, a certain number of seekers from all religious and cultural traditions have tended towards asceticism and austerities. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that, in later times, among followers of the *Mahāyāna* tradition, not only do the *dhūtaguṇas* become prerequisites for a *bodhisattva*, but the practice of severe *tapas* also resurfaces, the justification being that the Buddha himself had undergone such severities on his path to enlightenment. The Sanskrit *Lalitavistara* goes so far as to say that enlightenment cannot be attained without carrying out severe *tapas* for many *kalpas* (ages).¹⁸

Part of the problem faced by the *Mahāyāna* tradition was the *bodhisattva* doctrine, which presumes that the Buddha would have been born as a spiritually advanced *bodhisattva*. If that had been the case, why then would he

have bothered with the practice of austerities? And if it were so, then should all *bodhisattvas* be expected to follow the same pattern? In its attempts to reconcile the problem, the *Lalitavistara Sūtra* suggests that the Buddha's intention had been to outdo the deluded 'heretics' at their own practice, while yet knowing that such practices had no spiritual benefit. By doing so, he could then appeal more readily to the people.¹⁹

Since some texts consistently condemn austerities, some approve of them, and others altogether ignore the subject, it seems that the later Buddhist tradition simultaneously encompassed both perspectives.

See also: **austerities** (8.5), **dhutanga** (8.5).

1. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 1:2.1–6.
2. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 1:5.1–2.
3. *Prashna Upanishad* 1:4.
4. *Kaṭha Upanishad* 2:1.6.
5. *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka* 6:63.3, in *TUSS* p.164.
6. Cf. *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* 3:12.3.1.
7. *Manu Smṛiti* 11:235–45.
8. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11:20.37, in *TUSS* p.167.
9. *Atharva Veda* 11:5, in *CVAB* 57.
10. *Manu Smṛiti* 12:104.
11. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 4:4.22.
12. See also *Manu Smṛiti* 11:72–266, *SBE25* pp.444–83.
13. Jinasena, *Ādi Purāṇa* 38:34, *APJJ*; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, *CSCM* p.21; both in *JYMS* p.185.
14. *Majjhima Nikāya* 36, *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.246–49; cf. *MDBB* pp.340–42.
15. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:181–90, *PTSA3* pp.219–21; *Majjhima Nikāya* 5 (*Anaṅgaṇa Sutta*), 113 (*Sappurisa Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.30–31, *PTSM3* pp.39–42.
16. E.g. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 1:2, *PTSV* pp.59–83.
17. E.g. *Mahāvīyutpatti* 49, *MVSK*; *Dharma Saṃgraha* 63, *DSMM*; *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, *ASPP* p.387, in *BDBL* pp.135–37.
18. *Lalitavistara Sūtra* 287:20, *LVSL*, in *BDBL* p.138.
19. *Lalitavistara Sūtra* 250:4, 250:21, 256:13, 251:3, 259:1, *LVSL*, in *BDBL* pp.139–40.

tapasyā (S/H) *Lit.* the practice or performance of austerities (*tapas*). See **tapas**.

tapu (Mo) *Lit.* sacred, prohibited, restricted; inherently charged with *mana*, which is sacred or occult power, spiritual energy, or the power of the *atua*

(ancestor deities); a sacred state or energy; a supernatural condition that is holy, requiring preservation, protection, and restricted access; cognate with the Tongan *tabu*, which is the origin of the anglicization 'taboo'.

In general, declaring someone or something to be *tapu* is an indication of its being imbued with power or an enhanced degree of hidden spiritual or supernatural energy. It identifies a condition that embodies sacred power (*mana*) that must be protected. Since it is understood that this higher power can also be potentially dangerous to the ordinary (*noa*) person, the condition of *tapu* signifies a need for protection. Therefore, the community understands that anything *tapu* is under restriction, forbidden, unsafe, out of bounds or inaccessible, and people are alerted to observe the correct protocols of avoidance, and to treat the person, place, or object with respect and reverence.

Tapu is 'restriction for preservation' because the laws of *tapu* were created for the purpose of preserving *mana*. *Tapu* is the 'restriction' and *mana* is the power being 'preserved'. Restrictions were "placed on many things in Māori society, most having good reasoning behind them, often based on hygiene, environmental conservation, and personal preservation."¹

Nowadays, the condition of *tapu* is applied to a variety of disparate things ranging from the highly spiritual to ritual outcomes, bewitchments, nobility of high descent, darkness, death, defilement, filth, and even dangerous cliff edges and mountain tops. It has been used traditionally as a very effective socio-religious measure of control to suggest respect and protective measures, to indicate something disapproved of by banning it, placing it under prohibition, or making it taboo or untouchable. The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand's South Island explains two aspects of *tapu* – its sacredness and its restriction:

There is simply *tapu* in being. Everything has its own form of *tapu* because it has its own power. The *tapu* of sacred items is created to protect the *mana* behind them. People are restricted from sacred items so that they do not become *noa* or common. This is where the preservation of spiritual *tapu* lies, in that we continue to hold certain things in esteem by special treatment. Spiritual *tapu* also brings us to another level of understanding....

The formula of restriction for preservation is the same. However, by not touching sacred items until special moments, we are building power in the psyche itself. This means that a belief can shape our inner potential to rise to the moment, and be our best. By not touching an item such as a sacred axe it remains *tapu*. Its *mana* remains intact. Only its owner can carry it. This creates subconscious borders in the psyche. Power is built up in the psyche to the point that, when one finally takes up that sacred item, there is a sudden shift in the subconscious. This is what *tapu* does to us. It builds the power within and then unleashes our inner potential when the time is right. ... In psychological terms,

when a *tapu* is broken the potential to unleash inner power is lost. The subconscious has been programmed by Māori so that when lines are crossed certain things will definitely take place, if not around oneself, then certainly within.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.101–2, 304

The ultimate source of this sacred power is *Io* the Supreme Being. Every stage in the unfolding of creation is viewed by the Māori as a manifestation of *Io* the Most Supreme. From the divine potential of *Io* emerged *Te Pō* ('the Night', 'the Darkness', 'the Void'). The creative powers within the 'Darkness' culminated when the pure elemental energy of *Io-te-Pukenga* (*Io* the primal Source), through the agency of the deity *Tāne*, caused the separation of *Rangi* (Sky Father) and *Papa* (Earth Mother), the male and female poles of duality that had previously been bound together in union, symbolized as tight embrace. This separation of the poles of duality caused light to break forth. It was then that *Io* the Supreme Being became known as *Io-Tapu* (*Io* the Most Sacred or Holy). At this cosmic event, the *mana-tapu* or sacred power was passed from *Io* to *Tāne*, as fulfilment of *Io*'s utterance that the light should go forth.

Simultaneously, the seventy sons or offspring that had been restricted and contained within the embrace of *Rangi* and *Papa* were also liberated. Later, these 'sons' together with their 'parents' were appointed by *Io-Mata-Pūtahi* (*Io* the Voice of the First Command) to jointly manage, control and keep order over the energy of the elements (wind, rain, thunder, *etc.*). It is they who became the *atua* or gods.

The *atua* were regarded as the ancestors of the Māori, especially of the Māori nobility. Their *mana* was passed down through the generations in the firstborn of the family. The "*ariki*, the firstborn of a firstborn", was therefore seen as the embodiment of the "*tapu* of the accumulated line of ancestors":

The power of the *tapu*, coming from divine ancestors, would come with augmented force directly through from of old in an unbroken stream to the still-living descendants. That is the reason why the *ariki*, the firstborn of a firstborn, was held in such veneration; in him was centred, not the *tapu* of only being himself god-descended, but the *tapu* of the accumulated line of ancestors directly to the one regarded as the supreme, distant in time, but actually present in his *mana*, in the *ariki*.

Johannes Andersen, "Maori Religion," MRJA p.523

The *mauri ora*, the sacred spark of life within every human being originates from *Io* the Most Supreme through the agency of the *atua* (gods). This divine spark is itself extremely *tapu*, and represents the true vitality of a person's physical, mental, moral, and spiritual welfare. *Tapu* is recognized as a person's greatest possession, providing protection and the potentiality for spiritual power or *mana*. This personal *tapu* is always in need of protection,

right from the time of birth, as the Roman Catholic priest Michael Shirres, writing in 1982, says:

In the birth of the child, a new *tapu* is brought into being and this *tapu* must be protected from contact with the *tapu* of other members of the village, and especially the *tapu* of strangers, until this *tapu* has been strengthened and confirmed.

Michael Shirres, "Tapu," TMS p.43

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931), most of whose information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island, adds:

In pre-European times, the *mauri* (life force) of an infant was rendered *tapu*, and so protective, by means of a ceremony performed by a *tohunga*, or priestly expert. The ritual recited over the child was often termed a *mauri*. In some cases a post was set up to act as a kind of talisman – that is, a material *mauri* – to protect the welfare of the child. Such posts were known as *tuapa tamariki*. The *mana* or power of such a post emanated, of course, from the gods, and was implanted in it, as it were, by means of sacerdotal (priestly) ceremonial.

Elsdon Best, *Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori*, SMMB p.24

Personal *tapu*, however, is always in danger of defilement:

A person's *wairua* (spirit) is very easily affected injuriously if he has had the misfortune to pollute or vitiate his *tapu*. Such a condition affects one's *toiora* (protection from evil influences) and *mauri ora* (sacred spark of life) to a very serious extent, and it is necessary to conciliate the gods without delay, or life will be very uncertain. When your *tapu* becomes polluted, you become *pāhunu* (apprehensive, fearful of coming evil) and *kahupōtia* (spiritually blind). The powers of evil find you defenceless, the gods stand aside; the *kouka*, or abyss of death, yawns before you.

Elsdon Best, *Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori*, SMMB p.10

The consequences of weakened *tapu* could be dire:

The *mauri ora* ... denotes the sacred spark of life. Should it become *noa* (common) or void of *tapu*, the person's life is in danger.

Elsdon Best, "Spiritual Concepts of the Maori," SCM2 p.4

Io the Most Supreme is the source of all *tapu*, and knowledge of the supreme Being was highly *tapu*, kept strictly secret, known only to a select few. The Māori at large knew little of the primordial supreme Being. Rather, they

considered the *atua* or elemental gods to be the fundamental source of *mana* and the corresponding sacred condition of *tapu*.

The intermediaries and manipulators of *tapu* were the *tohunga*, initiates of the elite *whare wānanga* (school of sacred knowledge) and people with special gifts and qualities. They were adepts in communion with the gods and knew how to open themselves and to become channels for this primordial *mana* or power, and how to work with the *atua* at the earthly level. Their work could be for the good and even result in miracles, or it could be for black magic and wizardry (*mākutu*) with the potential to harm or even kill. Through ceremony, ritual, *karakia* (incantations) and touch, the *tohunga* harnessed the *mana* and used it by transferring it into *karakia*, people, tools, talismans, land, shrines, altars, fire and so on, all of which then became *tapu* – sacred and restricted. This had the effect of manifesting higher energies at the material level, and thus caused people, things and even their environment to become imbued with the power or *mana* of the *atua*, and therefore to become *tapu*. The *tapu* restriction was not only to protect the intrinsic *mana* within the now sacred person or object and to safeguard it from being rendered *noa* (ordinary), but also for the protection of common mortals, since the *mana* was regarded as potentially dangerous, contagious, and able to spread. *Tapu* therefore acted to balance uncontrolled *mana*.

The institution of *tapu* was highly respected and feared. “Every tribe,” says Samuel Timoti Robinson, had “different views on *tapu* yet no interpretation is more correct than the other.”² As the writer, poet, naturalist and ethnologist Johannes Andersen (1873–1962) writes, the life of every Māori was bounded by *tapu*:

Daily life was so ordered as to be in accord with the wishes of his gods (*atua*). He was in no doubt as to how his life should be ordered; he was bound by the powerful law of *tapu*.

Johannes Andersen, “Maori Religion,” *MRJA* p.514

This meant that the person, place or item was restricted, possibly dangerous, set apart, under protection, forbidden, untouchable, and no longer to be put to common use until the *tapu* had been lifted by a *tohunga*. This was achieved through rituals and *karakia* that brought about the condition of *noa* – ordinary, free of *tapu*, safe, and common.

Should a person touch a *tapu* object with his hand, then that hand would become *tapu* and must be purified or released from *tapu* before it could be used again, which in some cases could take up to three weeks.

The laws surrounding *tapu* were more than a substitute for civil law, and governed the existence of traditional Māori society, holding it in a strict order. There was hardly any aspect of ritual or everyday life that was not governed by the laws of *tapu*:

The word *tapu* simply means ‘forbidden’ ... or ‘set apart’; a house *tapu* for a *rangatira* (chief) could be used by no one below him in rank; a fishing ground made *tapu* could be used by no one until the *tapu* was removed, and a sign (*rāhui*) would usually be erected at or near the ground to serve as a warning which was far more rigorous than the *Pākehā*’s (foreigner’s) similar sign: “Trespassers will be prosecuted as the law directs.” The reason the Māori took the utmost care not to violate *tapu*, not to break the law, was that punishment was severe, and swift, and sure. The civil law may be broken ... and nothing happens unless he is found out, and even then the punishment may be slight. Entirely different was the law of *tapu*. It was not necessary that the offender should be detected in the breach; his punishment commenced immediately he himself knew he had offended. So deeply was this ingrained, this feeling of the inevitability of punishment for breach of *tapu*, that the end was certain; and the end was usually death. ... The offender’s conscience was accuser, judge, and executioner in one, and he knew no mercy. The conscience-guilty Māori literally dreaded himself to death. ... The Māori victim punished by the gods through himself for violation of *tapu* usually died within three days, it might be less, and not only did he die, but there was an actual feverish physical change during the process of dying.

Johannes Andersen, “Maori Religion,” MRJA pp.514–15

When a person commits some *hara* (violation) – that is to say, disregards some law of *tapu* – his protecting genius, or *atua*, at once deserts him, withdraws his favour and protection, and that person’s *mauri ora* (sacred spark of life) becomes seriously affected and loses its virtue. For the gods are the strength, the mainstay, of *tapu*, of *mana*.

Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB p.23

Samuel Timoti Robinson agrees:

In old Māori times, there was no limit as to how far *tapu* went. Everything seemed to be bound in *tapu*. A violation of *tapu* was called a *hara*. This was sometimes punishable by death and at other times the *atua* would punish the culprit. When someone had committed a *hara*, their spiritual powers would abandon them and they would become spiritually blind. Here the services of the *tohunga* were called upon to put the infringement right. At other times, a person would have to apologize for the wrongdoings to correct the broken *tapu*.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.101–2

The *tohunga*’s ability to lift *tapu* was understandably important:

The rite of lifting *tapu* becomes more than removing bad energy. By performing the exorcism rite one partakes in mythology. The *tohunga* becomes *Tāne*, a representation of the god of light. In the course of lifting *tapu* he becomes *Tāne*, separating *Rangi* (Sky Father) and *Papa* (Earth Mother) at the beginning of creation. His prayers are empowered with the force of *ihi*, meaning ‘separation’, ‘uplifting’, and ‘power’. The bad *tapu* being removed becomes *Te Pō*, the darkness that *Tāne* seeks to end in the myth.

When the *tohunga* succeeds in lifting the *tapu*, he is *Tāne* triumphantly opening *te ao mārama*, the world of light (this world). Here, in the ritual, the *wairua* (spirit) invoked was the god *Tāne*, who provides the *mana* for the ritual. And the myth itself, the *ihi* or ending of darkness, provides a directive current for the *mana*. The *tapu* is lifted because the myth empowers the work of the *tohunga* as he runs with its direction and relives that moment.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.109

The *tohunga* themselves are *tapu* and sacred, and they keep themselves away from common things. The *tūāhu* (shrine), *ahurewa* (altar), *ahi-taitai* (sacred fire) and *ahu* (sacred place) where they were located were the most *tapu* of all. It was deemed to contain great *mana*, was greatly feared, and had *tapu* enough to kill a person should he trespass upon the site, even accidentally.

With the arrival of Europeans and their own ideas of what is sacred and restricted, the *tohunga* were eventually outlawed, Māori culture suppressed, and the Māori themselves began to change their attitudes:

When the Europeans arrived in Aotearoa, Māori saw that these new people were able to break many *tapu* yet no harm came to them. The Europeans were seen to be a much freer race. And so Māori cautiously began to break some of the *tapu* restrictions. At first they thought death would immediately strike them down, but soon they realized they wouldn’t be hurt. Now many things are made *noa* or common.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.102

The sage Te Mātorohanga (*fl.* 1836–1865) pointed to the loss of contact with *Io* the supreme Being as the reason for the withdrawal of the *atua* from involvement in human life. He believed that it has been degradation of human understanding of the sacred and unmanifest that has caused “confusion” in the minds of human beings, who now live in a “wilderness”:

Notwithstanding that the teachings from the *whare wānanga* (school of sacred knowledge) are now mere shreds, because they are no longer combined, some still remain whilst others are lost; some parts diverge

(from the originals) and to some additions have been made. This is in consequence of the decadence of the power, authority and prestige of the conduct of the various rituals, of the (abrogation of) the *tapu*, of the (unbelief in) the gods, until, at the present time, there is none of the ancient *mana*, or power left. All things have changed; the *tapu* has ended; the true teaching has been lost, as well as the *karakia* (invocations, *etc.*), the meanings of which are now (comparatively) unknown.

Because the *tapu* was all-important, the first of all things – without it none of the powers of the gods were available, and without the aid of the gods all things are without authority and ineffectual – the (mind of man) is now in a state of confusion (*lit.* like a whirlwind), as are all his deeds; the land is the same. The *whare wānangas*, the *karakias* (ritual chants), the *tūāhus* (shrines), the *pures* (sanctification) of man of different kinds, baptism of men with water are all abandoned. So also are the powers to attract fish and birds, or to influence the growth of food plants. At the present time, different *karakias*, different methods, different *tapus*, even a different language prevails. Hence it is that the present teaching differs from that of the old priests (*tohungas*), . . . and hence also it is that I impress on you the (former) aspect of these things, that you may be clear as to the descent of the *mana-atua* (godlike powers) even from *Io* (the supreme God), and from the *whatukuras*, *māreikuras* (categories of attendants to *Io*) and the *apas* (spirits) of each separate heaven, down to the *patupaiarehe* and *tūrehu* (categories of fairy people).

At the present time, those kinds of gods no longer exist; they have become degraded into reptiles, stones, and trees – such are the present gods. And the (true, original) reptile-gods, stone-gods, tree-gods no longer exist. Men now live in a wilderness; they are careless of these things, of everything. It is for this reason that no *mana* (adequate power to make use of and apply this ancient knowledge) will be attained by you. And I also say to you (his scribe, Hoani Turi Te Whatahoro Jury) that those things which you are writing (from my dictation) are but the ends, fragments, of the truth, a portion only of sacred things. The (anciently) established and true teaching has become effaced, as well as the (science of) the *tapu*, together with the true godlike powers that descended from *Io* the Great, *Io* the Parentless. Enough of these words to you.

Te Mātorohanga, Lore of the Whare-wānanga, LWW1 pp.104–5

Te Mātorohanga also comments on the detrimental effects that cooked English food had upon the sacred condition of the Māori people and their ancient traditions. Cooked food and water boiled in cooking pots was considered an antidote to *tapu*, and hence to the protection offered by its *mana*:

It was only after the introduction of Christianity that common persons such as Rihari Tohi and I were allowed to speak of such matters. On account of it being *tapu*, such matters could only be discussed within the *whare wānanga* (school of learning). When people lost their condition of *tapu*, they entered the food houses of white men; hence were lost the powers of the *whare wānanga* of our elders consigned to the spirit world.

Te Mātorohanga, in "Maori Religion," MRJA p.547

Samuel Timoti Robinson observes that modern man's loss of all sense of the sacred has led to the violation of the planet, and he wonders whether some sense of *tapu* could be restored:

Today we have to ask ourselves: "How do we live spiritually in the modern world while not violating the laws of *tapu*?" These days, we can never live in oneness with the laws of *tapu* as these laws have their root in the natural cycle of the earth and the *atua* are the natural cycle. This would mean having to return to the old way of living without technology. In the modern age we have to look at *tapu* differently and find out what *tapu* still apply and how we can establish some balance on earth by strengthening *tapu*. Today the numbers of fish to be found in the seas around Japan, and many other countries, have severely diminished. The *tapu* has been violated. Perhaps in future we can find a way to incorporate *tapu* in all industries for the betterment of the world.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.102

See also: **atua** (►1), **kapu**, **karakia**, **mana** (Māori) (7.3), **noa**, **tohunga** (7.1).

1. Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga, TRAK* p.100.
2. Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga, TRAK* p.102.

tarpaṇ(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* satiety, satisfaction (given or received), gratification; an act of pleasing or being pleased; an offering of water (a libation) made to a deity, a sage, or ancestors; usually performed immediately after bathing (*snāna*), while still standing in the water, according to details of the ritual described in the *Manu Smṛiti*.¹ The *Manu Smṛiti* defines *tarpaṇa* as:

A rite in which water is offered as a libation
to the gods and ancestors.

Manu Smṛiti 3:70

Mystics have seen no spiritual value in external rituals. The *sandhyā* and *Gāyatrī Mantra* are prayers recited in the morning and evening:

He says his *sandhyā*, and makes offerings of water (*tarpaṇ*),
and recites the *gāyatrī* –
But without true understanding,
he still suffers in pain.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 603, AGK

Tarpaṇa appears in some lists of the ‘six practices (*ṣaṭ-karma*)’ of Hinduism.

See also: **pīṭripūjā**, **ṣaṭ-karma**.

1. *Manu Smṛiti* 2:176.

tasbīḥ (A/P) *Lit.* glorification; glorification of God, praising God; the exclamation, “*Subḥān Allāh* (Glory to God, Praise God)!”; a hymn, a psalm, an anthem; using a rosary for the praises of God; thus, a rosary itself, also called a *subḥah* or a *misbahah*; hence the expressions, *tasbīḥ kardan* (to make glorification, to praise God, to say prayers with the help of a rosary), *tasbīḥ gardānīdan* (to tell a rosary), *tasbīḥ-i hazār dānah* (a rosary of a thousand beads, the outsize rosary of a hypocrite); a form of obligatory or mandatory devotion (which includes ritual prayers, fasting, and *ḥajj*), and which is contrasted with voluntary or supererogatory devotion (which includes additional prayers, and various forms of charity and helping others); one of a number of identifying items carried by Muslim clerics of the past, including a staff (*aṣā*), a comb (*shānah*) and a tooth-cleaning stick (*miswāk*), usually a twig from the aromatic *arāk* tree; commonly used by Sufis, different orders having different sizes of rosary, some wearing a huge rosary around their neck, as an *aide-mémoire*; also, a form of repetition or remembrance (*dhikr*), using a rosary or counting on the fingers.

A *tasbīḥ* usually consists of thirty-three or ninety-nine beads, and has been used for many centuries for devotional repetition of various prayer formulae or recitation of the names of *Allāh*. Various short prayers, litanies, invocations or *dhikr* are repeated as each bead is slipped through the fingers, the intention being to aid concentration of the mind and to hold God constantly in mind. Recitation formulae include, “*Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but God),” “*Subḥān Allāh*,” so on, including a number of brief excerpts from the *Qurʾān*.

The practice of repeating the name of God is supported by a number of *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories associated with the Prophet). The Prophet is reported to have said:

He who says “*Subḥān Allāh*” thirty-three times at the end of every prayer, and thanks God thirty-three times, and performs *takbīr* (says “*Allāhu akbar*, *Allāh* is greatest”) thirty-three times, and says, “There is no god but *Allāh*, nor has He a partner, to Him is sovereignty and to Him are thanks due, and He is all-powerful” – his sins will be forgiven, even though they be as abundant as the foam on the sea.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim 4:1243; cf. HSM

It is also said that when the poor members of the Prophet’s followers observed that the rich could obtain greater blessings through their ability to give more in charity, he replied that such repetition would enable them to “catch up with those who precede you, and get ahead of those who come after you”, and that “only those who do as you do will be more excellent than you.”¹

Although rosaries have been used by Sufis, many have maintained the superiority of internal worship. Religion, says Sa’dī, lies in serving others; it is not in external forms:

Religion (*ṭarīqat*) lies in nothing but the service of the people:
It is not in the rosary (*tasbīḥ*), the prayer carpet,
and *darvīsh* garment (*dalaq*).

Sa’dī, Bustān 1:365, KSSS p.85; cf. BSS p.64

Many Sufi poets have expressed themselves metaphorically, speaking of the intoxication of the wine of divine love, the tavern of the inner sanctum and the wineseller (the *murshid* or master), which they contrast with the external forms of religion and ascetic practices. Foremost among them is Ḥāfiẓ:

You dwell with the rosary (*tasbīḥ*), the prayer-mat,
and the path of austerity (*zuḥd*) and chastity:
I with the tavern and the bell,
and the path of the cell (*dayr*) and of the place of worship.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHM (93:3) p.114, DIH p.60; cf. DHWC (61:3) p.151

On the path of the melody of the harp,
put aside idle talk and hypocrisy.
Abandon the rosary (*tasbīḥ*) and the cassock (*ṭaylasān*)
for wine and wine drinking.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.149, DIH p.259; cf. DHWC (329:2) p.570

The rosary (*tasbīḥ*) and the patched cloak (*khirqah*)
will not give you a drunkard’s pleasure:
For this, seek inspiration from the wineseller.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.208, DIH p.336; cf. DHWC (444:4) p.744

‘Irāqī and Sanā’ī both maintain that the *tasbīḥ* and other external practices have no place in the “tavern” of divine love:

The rosary (*tasbīḥ*) and daily prayers are out of place in the tavern,
among old hands who know all the tricks.

‘Irāqī, *Kullīyāt* 1950, *KHI* p.169; cf. in *SSE3* p.167

When has the lover’s suffering been relieved through magical spells?
When has the lover’s evening been changed to morning
by rosary (*tasbīḥ*) and prayer?

Sanā’ī, *Dīvān* 137, *AMM* p.301, in *SSE3* p.167

Rūmī observes that the outer forms of religion – exemplified by the *tasbīḥ* and even the *Qur’ān* – are the weapons of the lower mind (*nafs*) and its hypocrisy. They are not a means by which it may be subdued:

The *nafs* has a rosary (*tasbīḥ*) and the *Qur’ān* in its right hand,
but in its sleeve, a dagger and sword.
Do not believe its *Qur’ān* and hypocritical ostentation,
do not make yourself its confidante and comrade;
It will take you to the pool to perform the ritual ablution,
and will throw you to the bottom thereof. . . .
The common folk of the city
do not know the deceit of the *nafs* and of the body:
It is not subdued save by divine inspiration in the heart.

Rūmī, *Maṣnavī III*:2554–56, 2560; cf. *MJR4* p.143

See also: **subḥah**.

1. Cf. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 8:75.341, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 4:1239, *HSM*.

taumata-atua (Mo) *Lit.* resting place (*taumata*) of a god (*atua*); a form of Māori godstick; usually a carved rock or stone in which an *atua* is invited to take up residence by means of various rites, including *karakia* (incantations); somewhat similar to the other common form of Māori godstick, the *whakapakoko*. Stone figures representing the god *Rongo*, the *atua* of agriculture, were placed among the fields or in the garden in order to preserve the *mauri* (life force) of crops, especially fields of *kūmara* (sweet potato). See **whakapakoko rākau**.

ṭawāf (A), **tavāf** (P) (A/P) *Lit.* circumambulation, going around (usually something sacred); used particularly for circumambulation of the *Ka’bah*, the

sacred shrine at Mecca; a ritual performed seven times in an anticlockwise direction, with the *Ka'bah* on the left hand. According to the *Sunnah* (Muslim religious law), worshippers are supposed to kiss or touch the stone each time around, but since there are so many worshippers, day and night, a gesture of reaching out towards the stone is now considered acceptable, except during the times of set prayers.

Circumambulation is a definitive part of Muslim pilgrimage (*hajj*) to Mecca, though it can be performed at other times. The manner in which each round is conducted is according to various ritualistic procedures. It is also permissible to make the circuit riding on a camel, pushed in a wheelchair, or carried in a litter.

Many Sufis have said that the real circumambulation is of the spiritual heart. It is there that the seeker should focus his love and attention:

Circumambulate the *Ka'bah* of the heart (*dil*),
 if you have a heart.
 The heart is the spiritual *Ka'bah*,
 why think of it as mud?
 God has asked you to circumambulate the outer *Ka'bah*,
 since by doing so, you can acquire a heart.
 But you can circumambulate the *Ka'bah* a thousand times on foot,
 God will not accept it if you hurt someone's heart. . . .

To cherish an aching, wretched heart,
 is better than your *hajj* to God.
 A desolated heart is God's wealth and treasure,
 since there is many a treasure buried among ruins.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 3104:33104–6, 13–14, KSD6 pp.298–99

See also: **hajj**, **Ka'bah**.

tayammum (A/P) *Lit.* intending (to do something); a method of ritual cleansing, required before prayer, and practised as an alternative to the greater and lesser ablutions (*ghusl* and *wuḍū'*) when water is unavailable (as when travelling in the desert), or when there is legitimate reason not to use water. It consists of a ritual using either sand, earth or unfashioned stone as a substitute. The practice is sanctioned in the *Qur'ān* and described in the *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories):

If . . . you find no water, then take for yourselves clean sand or earth,
 and rub your faces and hands with it.

Qur'ān 4:43; cf. AYA

Mālik was asked about how *tayammum* was done and what parts were covered, and he said, “Strike the ground once for the face and once for the arms, and wipe them to the elbows.”

Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa’ 2.25.93, HM

According to the traditional story, the custom came about because of a lost necklace, which the Prophet’s wife ‘Āyishah had borrowed from her sister Asmā’:¹

Yahyá related to me – from Mālik from ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim from his father – that ‘Āyishah Umm al-Mu’minīn said, “We went out on a journey with the Messenger of *Allāh*, may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace, and when we came to *Bayḍā’* or *Dhāt al-Jaysh*, a necklace of mine broke. The Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace), stopped to look for it, and the people stopped with him. There was no water nearby and the people were not carrying any with them, so they came to Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq and said, ‘Don’t you see what ‘Āyishah has done? She has made the Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace) and the people stop when there is no water nearby, and they are not carrying any with them.’”

‘Āyishah continued, “Abū Bakr came, and the Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace) had fallen asleep with his head on my thigh. Abū Bakr said, ‘You have made the Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace) and the people stop when there is no water nearby, and they are not carrying any with them.’”

She continued, “Abū Bakr remonstrated with me and said whatever *Allāh* willed him to say, and began to poke me in the waist. The only thing that stopped me from moving was that the Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace) had his head on my thigh. The Messenger of *Allāh* (may *Allāh* bless him and grant him peace) slept until morning found him with no water. *Allāh*, the Blessed and Exalted, sent down the *āyāt* (verses) of *tayammum*, and so they did *tayammum*. Usayd ibn Ḥuḍayr said, ‘This is not the first blessing from you, O family of Abū Bakr.’”

‘Āyishah added, “We roused the camel I had been on, and found the necklace under it.”

Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa’ 2.24.91; cf. HM

According to another *ḥadīth*, Muḥammad also said:

The earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and a thing to perform *tayammum*. Therefore, anyone of my followers can pray wherever the time of a prayer is due.

Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 1:7.331, HSB

The symbolic significance of *tayammum* lies in actual contact with the earth, which is seen as giving the ritual the power to purify, both physically and psychologically. *Tayammum* is performed by mentally formulating the intention of purification and then running the hands over a natural, uncut stone. The hands are then rubbed together, the stone is again touched, and the hands are rubbed over the face and neck. The stone is then touched once again, and the left hand is passed over the right hand and arm up to the elbow, and the same for the other side. If earth or sand is used in place of the stone, it is only touched with the palms and shaken off. The hands are passed over the face and arms, but the earth is not rubbed in. The purpose is contact, not a ‘cleansing’ by spreading earth over the skin:

The principle which is invoked here resides in the primordial nature of earth and stone and its capacity – given the mysterious efficacy of rituals consecrated by revelation – to symbolize purity and convey purification, as water obviously does. The rites *wuḍūʾ* and *tayammum* give water and earth the power to purify and renew, . . . removing psychic pollution and imbalance. It is because of this that worked stone or manufactured materials, even if made from earth and stone, are unacceptable for *tayammum*; only that which God has fashioned, and not man, opens us to this power of nature.

Cyril Glassé, “*Tayammum*,” *Concise Encyclopedia of Islam*, CEI p.401

See also: **ghusl**.

1. *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 3:715, *HSM*.

tefillah (He) *Lit.* utterance, prayer; from the root *p-l-l* (to intervene, to intercede, to pray).

Tefillah is not so much a request of God, as a communing with Him. *Tefillah* is when a person shares his heart with God. It is sometimes said among the *ḥasidim* that every word of *tefillah* creates an angel that conveys one’s prayers to God. The emphasis of *tefillah* is a movement towards God, expressing thoughts and feelings in such a way that they become a divine act. Hence the biblical psalmist writes:

The Lord has heard my supplication:
the Lord receives my prayer (*tefillah*).

Psalms 6:10, *KB*

Tefillah is a common biblical term, also appearing in verb form as *le-hitpalel* and *mit-palel*:

For You, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel,
 has revealed to Your servant, saying:
 I will build You a house:
 therefore has Your servant found it in his heart
 to pray (*le-hitpalel*) this prayer (*tefillah*) to You.

2 Samuel 7:27; cf. KB

Have consideration therefore to the prayer (*tefillah*) of Your servant,
 and to his supplication, O Lord my God,
 to hearken to the cry and the prayer (*tefillah*)
 which Your servant prays (*mit-palel*) before You.

2 Chronicles 6:19; cf. KB

Tefillah also appears as a feminine entity or angel in some of the kabbalistic literature. The contemporary Israeli scholar Mor Altschuler writes that a feminine entity called ‘the Prayer (*ha-Tefillah*)’ was revealed to the early sixteenth-century kabbalist Asher Laemlein in a manner that recalls the revelation to Joseph Karo of the *Shekhinah* (divine immanence), which appeared as an angel, a *maggid*.¹

See also: **tefillin**.

1. Cf. Mor Altschuler, *Prophecy and Maggidism*, PMJK.

tefillin (Am) (sg. *tefillah*) *Lit.* prayers, phylacteries; from the Hebrew *tefillot* (prayers); two small, square, black leather boxes worn during daily morning prayers by Jewish worshippers, each box containing four particular biblical texts on parchment scrolls. One of the boxes is strapped on the head and hung in the middle of the forehead; the other is strapped onto the inside of the left arm, which is held so that it is close to the heart. The later Greek term *phylactērion* (from *phylassein*, to protect), from which the English word is derived, suggests a connection between this practice and the wearing of protective amulets, although evidence for such a connection or intention is lacking. Although technically a plural term, *tefillin* is often used in the singular.

Some scholars and philosophers have taught that the *tefillin* are a means of remembering God’s intervention in the lives of the Israelites – that He had brought them out of Egypt and freed them from slavery; that they were no longer bound to their Egyptian overlords but to God. This is according to *Exodus*.¹

And it shall be for a sign for you upon your hand, and for a memorial
 between your eyes, that the Lord’s *Torah* may be in your mouth; for
 with a strong hand did the Lord bring you out of Egypt.

Exodus 13:9; cf. KB

Deuteronomy has something similar:

And you shall lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul;
and bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they will be as frontlets
(*totafot*) between your eyes.

Deuteronomy 11:18; cf. KB

Neither these nor the two other places where a similar commandment is given stipulate which words should be used or how they are to be bound upon the head and arm. These additional instructions appear in the *Talmud*.²

Inside each of the *tefillin* are four biblical passages. Two of these enjoin remembrance of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt.³ The third is the commandment to remember and love God with all one's heart, soul, and strength;⁴ and the fourth contains God's promise that those who follow His commandments will be cared for – rain will fall in due season, there will be grass for cattle, and so on.⁵

Traditionally, these extracts are handwritten by a scribe on a scroll of parchment, using a special ink, and in a particular Hebrew script. The head *tefillin* has four separate compartments, one for each biblical passage, each written on a separate scroll. The arm *tefillin* has one compartment, and the four passages are written on a single scroll.

Wearing the *tefillin* on the forehead and close to the heart is probably a symbolic reminder to worship God in mind and heart. Some sages taught that wearing them on the arm near the heart and on the head above the brain demonstrates that one is willing to worship God through head and heart. In the folk tradition, it was thought that wearing *tefillin* would protect a person from entertaining bad thoughts.

Some moralists have added that the purpose of the *tefillin* is to help people subjugate their lower desires and encourage a spiritual focus in their lives. As Maimonides writes:

As long as the *tefillin* are on the head and on the arm of a man, he is modest and godfearing and will not be attracted by hilarity or idle talk; he will have no evil thoughts, but will devote all his thoughts to truth and righteousness.

Moses Maimonides, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Tefillin 4.25–6,

MTMM, in "Tefillin," TLJW

The *tefillin* are thus regarded as serving a positive role in an individual's spiritual and moral life.

See also: **tefillah**.

1. See also *Exodus* 13:1–16; *Deuteronomy* 6:4–9, 11:13–21.
2. See *Babylonian Talmud, Tractates Berakhot* 6a, 14b; *Menaḥot* 34b, 35b, 37a; *Shabbat* 108a, 130a.
3. *Exodus* 13:1–16.
4. *Deuteronomy* 6:4–9.
5. *Deuteronomy* 11:13–21.

Te Uru ō te Karakia (Mo) *Lit.* the (*te*) binding (*uru*) of (*ō*) the incantations (*karakia*); a ceremony in which the three most sacred Māori *karakia* are ‘bound together’ and repeated by *tohunga-ahurewa* (altar adepts) – advanced initiates of the highest level of the *Io* tradition. It is said that the more advanced among the *tohunga* also contacted the power (*mana*) that descends from the spiritual realms, by which means they ascended the cosmic vine (*te aka*) towards the Divine.

The three most sacred *karakia* are: the *Karakia ka Ikoa Tau*, which contains the sacred names of the ages of creation; the *Karakia ka Ikoa a Io*, which lists the sacred names of *Io* the Most Supreme; and *Te Aka Rangi*, which relates the story of the manifestation of the creation through the creative proliferation of the cosmic vine (*te aka*).

See also: **initiation (in Māori tradition)** (7.4), **Karakia ka Ikoa a Io** (►1), **Karakia ka Ikoa Tau** (►1), **Te Aka Rangi** (►1).

thawāb (A), **śawāb** (P) *Lit.* recompense, reward, merit; a good deed that earns a recompense; in a Muslim religious context, the reward in the hereafter, accrued by good deeds during life; a meritorious deed that earns a divine reward in the hereafter; as in such expressions as *śawāb-i shahīdān* (the reward of martyrs); “that which makes someone worthy of God’s mercy and forgiveness, and of the mediation of the Prophet”.¹

The *Qur’ān* describes the reward of the good believers:

As for those who believe and do good works, We shall not suffer the reward of anyone who does a single good deed to be lost. They will dwell in the gardens of Eden, beneath which rivers flow. Reclining there upon soft couches, they will be adorned with bracelets of gold, and arrayed in green garments of fine silk and heavy brocade. Blessed is their reward (*thawāb*)! How fair their resting place!

Qur’ān 18:30–31; cf. AYA, KPA, MGK

Islamic religious law, based on the *Qur’ān* and Muslim tradition, is replete with a system of rewards and punishments, detailing those deeds that bring

recompense (*thawāb*) in the next world, and those that merit hellfire. It is believed that every deed has its just recompense. Rūmī observes that even the imitator (*muqallid*) has his appropriate “recompense” – he who goes through the external motions of pious worship without really experiencing the inner Reality:

Even the imitator is not disappointed of the recompense (*śawāb*):
the professional mourner gets his wages at the time of reckoning.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī II:496, MJR2 p.247

He also says that the quest for merit in the hereafter is the province of those who are steeped in bodily consciousness, not of the true lovers of God:

Speak not of love with the people of the body (*bā-jismi-yān*),
for they are bound by the dictates of fear and hope,
reward (*śawāb*) and punishment.

Rūmī, Kullīyāt-i Shams-i Tabrīz 313:3424, KSD1 p.190; cf. in SSE3 p.184

See also: **fidyah**, **jazā**?

1. Jurjānī, *Ta'rifāt*, *KTJ* p.70; cf. in *SSE3* p.183.

tilak(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* mark, spot; a mark made by smearing powder or paste on the forehead or other parts of the body; commonly made of vermillion (*kumkum*, *sindūr*), turmeric, saffron, clay, ashes, sandalwood paste, or other substance; previously worn by priests, *sādhus* and devotees, but now a common Hindu practice; regarded as an auspicious mark, often used on religious and other official and social occasions such as coronations, betrothals, weddings, birthdays, and so on.

A simple *tilak* may be made using red powder and applied with a single upward stroke of the thumb. Various Hindu sects, *sādhus* and devotees, however, have their own distinguishing *tilaks*, as an outward symbol of the spirituality to which they aspire. Some of these are quite elaborate, covering the entire forehead, particularly those of the Vaishnavites and Shaivites (devotees of *Vishṇu* and *Shiva*). There are also *tilaks* particular to the various Indian castes.

In modern India, the *tilak* is less commonly used by married woman than the ubiquitous *bindī*. There are several differences between the two. A *tilak* is always comprised of paste or powder, while a *bindī* can be paste, a sticker, or jewellery; a *tilak* is worn by both men and women, but a *bindī* is restricted to women; a *tilak* is generally used only for religious, spiritual, or ceremonial purposes, while a *bindī* may signify marriage or be simply cosmetic; a *tilak*

can cover the face or other parts of the body, but a *bindī* is placed only on the forehead; the term *tilak* is used throughout India, while *bindī* is a Hindi word.

The *tilak* originally symbolized the third eye, associated with the representation of many Hindu deities, and signifying meditation and enlightenment. Indian mystics have called it the *til* (spot), *Shiva netra* (eye of *Shiva*), and so on.

In medieval times, it was believed that a *tilak* made on the forehead of a dying person would help the messengers of death to identify him as a religious person, and would thereby lead to salvation. But *Mīrābāī* points out that spiritual effort has to be made during life. Last minute rituals are not going to change the way life has been lived, or alter the character of mind that travels with the departing soul:

Throughout your life you never loved the Lord,
 now, on the verge of death, you expect to become a saint!
 When your house is ablaze you rush to dig a well:
 how can you then quench the flames and save the house? ...
 You knew the right course, but did not act:
 Now at the hour of your impending death,
 you get *tulsī* leaves and put a *tilak* on your forehead,
 and ask your relatives to recite God's name to you.
 Says *Mīrā*, O ignorant and foolish one,
 you are deceiving yourself and no one else.

Mīrābāī, Sudhā Sindhu, Satsang-updesh ke pad 92,

MSS p.780; cf. MDLS pp.192–93

Kabīr points out the uselessness of all external symbols and practices as ways of finding God within:

What use the *tilak* on your forehead,
 what use the rosary around your neck
 when you know not the way to meet the Lord?
 A restive beast, though bound with a clog,
 will not give up its truculent ways.

Your attire is shining white,
 your mind within is dark as night;
 What worth your holy garb,
 what use your rosary and beads,
 when you know not the way to meet the Lord?

Without true love and longing,
 what worth are your tears for Him?

Your mind within is covered
 with layer upon layer of dirt;
 How can you become clean and pure
 by washing and rinsing the body?
 What use your *tilak*, what use your rosary
 when you know not the way to meet the Lord?

You are only after worldly tastes,
 you know not the flavour of true devotion.
 Says Kabīr, you glitter like tinsel and are empty within;
 You know not the way to meet the Lord.

Kabīr, Granthāvalī, Pad 136, KG p.100, KWGN p.291

Many religions speak of the Lord's mark on the forehead, symbolizing initiation into or contact with the divine mystic Word or Name. This is the real diadem or mark of royal distinction that fills a soul with the true "beauty and grace" of God:

The Lord's Name is His own essence:
 it is the *tilak*, the diadem of the three worlds.
 When the slave Kabīr put it on his forehead,
 he acquired boundless beauty and grace.

Kabīr, Sumiran kā ang 3, KG p.4, KWGN p.611

The *tilak* is also a part of a Hindu ritual in which a *tilak* of sandalwood paste or vermilion is placed on the forehead as a form of blessing or baptism. The association of baptism with rituals associated with the forehead is a constant theme in world religions. It is a tacit acceptance of the fact that the centre of thought and consciousness is in the forehead, rather than in the heart, or some other part of human anatomy.

See also: **bindu**.

tira ora, tira mate (Mo) *Lit.* wand (*tira*) of life (*ora*); wand (*tira*) of death, disease, or misfortune (*mate*); a cleansing rite of absolution in which two wands or rods are used in conjunction, the one representing life and welfare, the other signifying death (*mate*) and misfortune.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931), most of whose information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island, describes how the rite is performed:

When performing this, the priest formed two small mounds of earth, known as *puke nui a papa* and *tūāhu a te rangi*, one representing the

earth and the female principle, the other standing for the heavens and the male principle. In the former, he erected a pole or wand (*tira*), termed the *tira mate*, and in the latter mound he inserted another termed the *tira ora*, or *tira* of life, health, *etc.* The *tira mate*, on the first mound represented death, sickness, misfortune, *etc.*; ... the *tira ora* stood for life, health, prosperity, *etc.* The priest, when performing the rite, cast down the *tira mate*, as he repeated his invocations to avert all evil, and left the *tira ora* standing while invoking life, prosperity, *etc.*

This singular rite was gone through at ceremonial feasts (*hākari*) and on other occasions in order to protect and preserve the health, prosperity, life, *etc.*, of the members of the tribe.

Elsdon Best, "Lore of the Whare-kohanga," LWK3 pp.161–62

The *tira ora* rite was performed on several different occasions, pertaining to both war and peace. ... Rites performed at these mounds caused all misdemeanours, the taint or effects of all wrong acts of the subjects, to be absorbed by the *tira mate*, leaving such subjects in a clean, pure condition intellectually and spiritually. The priest then overthrew the *tira mate* and left the *tira ora* standing. This rite was certainly of an absolutory nature.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM1 p.366

Thus, such persons were freed from the dangers to their spiritual, intellectual, and physical welfare ... induced by wrongdoing. They were rendered clear-minded, and, above all, were pure in the sight of the gods. They acquired resourcefulness, presence of mind, clear spiritual vision, and a clean crime sheet.

Elsdon Best, Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori, SMMB p.18

See also: **tūāhu**.

tīrth(a) (S/H), **tīrath**, **tīrath** (H/Pu), **gnas** (T), **cháoshèng** (C), **junrei**, **junpai** (J)

Lit. that whereby one crosses; a river ford, a river crossing, a ferry, a passage; hence, a Hindu, Buddhist or Jain shrine or place of pilgrimage on the bank of a river or stream; thus, any place of pilgrimage; also, a holy man, a *guru* or any object of veneration; hence also, *tīrthayātrā* (S) – a journey (*yātrā*) to a place of pilgrimage (*tīrtha*), and *tīrthacharyā* (S) – to visit a pilgrimage site; likewise, *cetiya* (*cārikā* (Pa), which is a journey (*cārikā*) to a memorial site (Pa. *cetiya*, S. *chaitya*), such as a stupa containing a relic or a place regarded as holy due to its association with a significant event in the life of the Buddha, especially his birth, his enlightenment, the beginning of his teaching, and his death (*parinirvāṇa*). In Chinese, *cháoshèng* means ‘to make a pilgrimage’; *cháobài* and *sankei* mean ‘pilgrimage’. In Japan, *junrei* and *junpai* are used

for both Buddhist and Shinto pilgrimages. *Junpai* is used in a wider context, while *junrei* is more commonly used in Buddhism.

In Jainism, a *Tīrthankara* (ford-maker), one who has crossed the troubled waters of existence and can lead others to the farther shore, is generally a term for any of the twenty-four perfected and liberated souls who, in their own times, led others on the path to liberation, and whom Jains look upon as the spiritual fathers and exemplars of their religion.

Tīrtha originally meant a river crossing, but now refers to a shrine or sacred pilgrimage place, often situated on the banks of a river or stream. A *tīrtha* is a place where God is believed to dwell or where He reveals himself. It may be a river, a stone, a mound, a large tree, a lake or any place associated in myth or history with gods or holy men. The term is sometimes used metaphorically for the journey of a yogi in spiritual regions during meditation.

In India, there are possibly more places of pilgrimage, major and minor, than in any other country of the world. Of these, sixty-eight are given prominence as the ‘sixty-eight places of pilgrimage’. These include the seven holy cities of Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Gayā, Vārāṇasī, Ujjain, Hardwār, and Dwārakā; the seven sacred rivers, of the Gangā (Ganges), Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Godāvarī, Narmadā, Sindhu (Indus), and Kāverī; sacred hills and mountains such as Kailāsh, Pārasnāth, Girnār, Ābū, and Palani; and holy lakes like the Bindu in Siddhapur, the Pampā in Karnataka, the Nārāyaṇa in Kachchh, the Mānasarovar at the foot of Mount Kailāsh, and Pushkara near Ajmer.

Despite the popularity of pilgrimage sites, Indian mystics and holy men have pointed out that no particular spiritual benefit accrues from going to holy places. The *Paingala Upanishad* says that outside activities only occupy the attention when there has been no realization of the inner Reality:

So long as there is no attainment of the Real, there will be endless ceremonies (*karmas*), observances of purity (*shaucha*), recitations (*japa*), performance of sacrifices (*yajñas*), and visits to places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha-yātrā*).

Paingala Upanishad 4:18

The *Darshana Upanishad* speaks of the subtle *chakras* and *nāḍīs* of the body as the true holy places, but adds that the greatest pilgrimage of all is the journey to the *ātman*, the soul or real self:

There is Shrī Parvata at the crown; Kedāra in the forehead; O wise one! Vārāṇasī at the junction of the brows and the nose; Kurukshetra in the region of the breast; Prayāga in the lotus of the heart; *chid-ambara* (focus of consciousness) in the midst of the heart; and Kamalālaya in the *mūlādhāra* (*chakra*). If, having abandoned his own (internal)

tīrthas, a person resorts to the external *tīrthas*, he chases after pieces of glass, abandoning the precious gems in his own hands. The *tīrthas* of subtle meditation are the supreme resort, and are the correct focus of all actions. . . .

O great sage, *yogīs*, by virtue of their assured faith in their own *ātman*, do not resort to *tīrthas* filled with water, nor to gods made of wood, and so on. The internal *tīrtha* is a *tīrtha* far superior to the external *tīrtha*; the *tīrtha* of the *ātman* is the greatest *tīrtha*; any other *tīrtha* has no significance. The internal *tīrtha* of the *chitta* (mind), if contaminated, cannot be purified by ablutions, and will remain impure. . . . O foremost of sages, water from washing the feet of holy men intent on attaining knowledge (of *Brahman*) and attaining *yoga* (union) – that is the *tīrtha* for the purification of the mind of the ignorant.

Darshana Upanishad 4:48–56; cf. *YU* pp.133–34

Shankara likewise observes that the true place of worship is at the shrine of one's own inner being:

He who, renouncing all activity, worships in the holy place (*tīrtha*) of his own soul (*ātman*) – which is free of all limitations of time, space and direction, which is present everywhere, which is the destroyer of heat and cold, which is stainless, and bliss eternal – he becomes all-knowing and all-pervading, and attains immortality.

Shankara, Ātmabodha 68; cf. *SKS* p.223

The *Padma Purāṇa* maintains that a truly holy man is a “moving holy place” and the “best of all holy places”, who “can destroy sins committed in former births”; and so too is the mystic “Name”:

For the liberation of human beings wandering in the material world, there is no holy place (*tīrtha*) more suited for cutting the bonds of *karma* than a preceptor. . . . The holy place (*tīrtha*) in the form of a preceptor can destroy sins committed in former births. This moving holy place (*tīrtha*) is excellent.

Padma Purāṇa 2:123.50–53; cf. *PPD3* pp.1343–44

The Name of *Vishṇu* is the best of all the holy places (*tīrtha*). Those who utter the Name of *Kṛishṇa* (*i.e.* *Vishṇu*) make the entire world a holy place (*tīrtha*).

Padma Purāṇa 3:50.17b; cf. *PPD4* p.1513

Guru Nānak echoes the same sentiment:

Why should I bathe at sacred shrines of pilgrimage (*tirath*)?

Nām is the sacred shrine of pilgrimage (*tirath*).

My pilgrimage (*tirath*) is spiritual wisdom within (*antar giān*),
and contemplation on the *Shabd*.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 687, AGK

Tulsī Sāhib says that external practices do not help in the quest for one's innermost Essence:

Within the body lies the Essence

sought by the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas*.

Within this body exists the entire universe,
so the sagacious saints say.

Recluses, ascetics and monks are searching
for Him in various garbs.

Ṛishis, *munis* and *avdhūtas* lay stress
on scriptures and holy books.

The learned of the world, puffed up with pride
in their scholarly traditions,
remain deluded by their erudition.

They delude the world through the practice of
pilgrimage (*tirath*), fasting, and charity;

They glorify bathing in holy waters,
and their followers bear the evil consequences.

They get lost in rituals and external observances
and can never reach the destination.

Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 2, Holī 3, TSH2 p.23; cf. TSSH p.27

Mīrābāī also says that nothing is as holy as the “feet of the saints”:

The sixty-eight holy places (*tīrath*)

are at the feet of the saints (*santon*);

So too are millions of Kāshīs and Gangās.

Mīrābāī, Shabdāvalī, Mishrit ang, Shabd 22:3, MBS p.54

Swami Vivekananda, speaking to an Indian audience, also says that simply going to a place of pilgrimage does not grant forgiveness of sins. Holiness is associated with a holy person, not with a place:

People have become so degraded in this *kaliyuga* that they think they can do anything, and then they can go to a holy place, and their sins will be forgiven. If a man goes with an impure mind into a temple, he adds to the sins that he had already, and goes home a worse man than when he left it. *Tīrtha* is a place which is full of holy things and holy

men. But if holy people live in a certain place, and if there is no temple there, even that is a *tīrtha*. If unholy people live in a place where there may be a hundred temples, the *tīrtha* has vanished from that place.

Swami Vivekananda, Address at the Rāmeshwaram Temple, CWSV3 p.141

It is at this stage – and when a man sees God in everything, and everything in God – that he attains perfect *bhakti*. It is then that he sees *Vishṇu* incarnated in everything from the microbe to *Brahmā*, and it is then that he sees God manifesting Himself in everything, it is then that he feels that there is nothing without God, and it is then and then alone that, thinking himself to be the most insignificant of all beings, he worships God with the true spirit of a *bhakta*. He then leaves *tīrthas* and external forms of worship far behind him; he sees every man to be the most perfect temple.

Swami Vivekananda, Address at Sialkot, CWSV3 p.363

Some details of a few of India's holy places follow.

Indian Cities of Pilgrimage

Allāhabād. One of the largest cities in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, situated on the wedge of land formed by the confluence of the river Ganges and the river Yumanā. Regarded by Hindus as one of the most sacred of places, it is popularly known as Prayāg, meaning 'a place of sacrifice'. According to popular belief, the river Sarasvatī, which disappears into the sand in the south west of the Punjab, reappears at this point, uniting with the Ganges and the Yamunā.

Every year, large crowds of pilgrims gather in the month of *Māgha* (January) for the *Māgha Melā*. Every twelve years, several million people come together for the *Kumbha Melā*, to take what is regarded as a holy bath at the confluence of these three rivers.

The belief is perhaps a literalization of something deeply mystical. Mystics have said that the three currents of *īḍā*, *pingalā* and *sushumṇā* meet at *triveṇī*, in the third spiritual region (*daswān dwār*). Here, they flow into *mānasarovar*, an ocean of energy, consciousness and pure spirituality, where the soul on its upward ascent bathes, being cleansed of the last traces of impressions incurred during its billions of past lives.

Indian mystics have said that taking the soul to this level of consciousness is the true pilgrimage and the true holy bath.

Amarnāth. A place of Hindu pilgrimage in Kashmir; believed to be the dwelling place of *Shiva*. The focus of the pilgrimage is a cave from whose roof water keeps trickling. A religious festival is held there at the end of the month of *Sāwan* (July/August). Because of the extreme cold, the heavy snow falls and its altitude of 15,000 feet, nobody can live there.

Asī. A place held sacred by the Hindus, situated on the banks of the river Asī near its entry into the Ganges, and close to the entry of another tributary, the Varuṇā. The city of Vārāṇ-asī (Vārāṇasī or Kāshī) is situated between the Asī and the Varuṇā, giving rise to its name.

Ayodhyā. A town in the state of Uttar Pradesh on the Ghaghara River in the district of Faizabād, regarded by Hindus as sacred and as a place of pilgrimage, because – according to the religious epic of the *Rāmāyaṇa* – it was the birthplace of Rāma.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh observes ironically that the residents of Ayodhyā deem it necessary to go on a pilgrimage to some other place:

The Lord is within us but the ignorant *jīva* is always seeking Him outside. Residents of Kāshī and Prayāg go to Ayodhyā and Vṛindāvan to find the Lord; while residents of Hardwār and Badrināth, Ayodhyā and Vṛindāvan go to Prayāg in search of Him. Only a perfect *satguru* can put an end to this roaming about. Hence, one should seek a *satguru*. *Paṇḍits* and *bhekhs* (priests) are themselves deluded, and delude others too.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan 2:214, SBAT p.120

Badrināth. A place of Hindu pilgrimage in the Himalayas, on the river Ganges. The nineteenth-century mystic Tulsī Sāhib of Hathras writes that God is not found by roaming about, visiting the “four holy places” (Jagannāth Puri in the east, Dwārakā in the west, Rāmeshwaram in the extreme south, and Badrināth in the north):

The Lord has neither form nor shape,
and yet the ritualist roams about in search of Him:
He wanders to all the four holy places,
but his object remains unfulfilled.

He reaps no reward from stones
and gains no benefit from water.
In fact, the Lord resides within the house,
O Tulsī, but there he seeks Him not.

Tulsī Sāhib, Shabdāvalī 1, Kakaharā 5, TSH1 p.24; cf. in TSSH p.45

Vārāṇasī, Benares, Kāshī. An ancient city in northeast India, situated in the southeast of Uttar Pradesh, on the banks of the river Ganges, dating perhaps from the thirteenth century BCE. One of the earliest centres of Aryan and later Hindu philosophy and religion, now a city held to be sacred and a place of pilgrimage for Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists.

Vārāṇasī has been the religious capital of the Hindus for as long as can be remembered. Every devout Hindu hopes one day to visit Vārāṇasī, and

perhaps to die there in old age. Every year, many millions of pilgrims visit the city, a long journey many will never make again. Visits to all the major shrines and temples, mostly to the god *Shiva*, can take a week, but devout pilgrims believe that by doing so all their *karma* is absolved, and that they stand a good chance of liberation from the cycle of birth and death, attaining union with *Brahman*.

Vārāṇasī was under the control of the *brāhmaṇs* (Hindu priestly class) until the Muslim conquest of North India. But the Hindu tradition was never suppressed, surviving five centuries of Muslim dominion and two centuries of British rule.

Like a number of Hindu holy places, Vārāṇasī is situated at the conjunction of two rivers, Varuṇā and Asī. Both are tributaries of the Ganges, hence its name, Vārāṇ-a-sī (Vārāṇasī) and the anglicization, Benares. The sixteenth-century saint Kabīr lived and taught there, where he wrote and spoke in forthright language concerning the practices of the learned *pañḍits*, *brāhmaṇs*, and the many *sādhus* who flocked there. In fact, in one notable poem preserved in the *Ādi Granth*, he calls them the “thugs (*thag*)” – cheats or swindlers – of Vārāṇasī.

In this poem, Kabīr depicts the condition of the priests and religious leaders who dominated the social and religious life of Vārāṇasī at that time. Kabīr exposes their hypocrisy and rejects their claims to holiness, condemning their insistence on the so-called purity of their food, which has to be cooked on a fire of washed wood and which others may not touch. Their assumed piety and superiority, he says, is just a way of beguiling and cheating simple people in order to earn wealth and respect:

They wear loincloths, three and a half yards long,
and triple-wound sacred threads.

They have rosaries around their necks,
and they carry glittering jugs in their hands.

They are not called saints of the Lord –
they are thugs (*thag*) of Vārāṇasī.

Such ‘saints’ are not pleasing to me:
they eat the trees along with the branches.

They wash their pots and pans before putting them on the stove,
and they wash the wood before lighting it.

They dig up the earth and make two fireplaces,
but they eat the whole person!

Those sinners continually wander in evil deeds,
while they call themselves touch-nothing saints.

They wander around for ever and ever in their self-conceit,
and all their families are drowned.

He is attached to that to which the Lord has attached him,
and he acts accordingly.
Says Kabīr, one who meets the true *guru* is not reincarnated again.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 476, AGK

Many mystics – out of compassion for human beings who are being misled – have pointed out that real spiritual progress and the washing of sins of myriads of past lives does not result from going on pilgrimages to holy places, nor from taking baths in rivers and lakes regarded as sacred. Nāmdev says:

Someone may practise austerities at Vārāṇasī,
or die upside-down at a sacred shrine of pilgrimage (*tirath*),
or burn his body in fire, or rejuvenate his body to life almost forever;
He may perform the *ashvamedha-yajña* (horse sacrifice),
or give donations of gold covered over (*i.e.* concealed),
but none of these is equal to the worship of the Lord's Name (*Nām*).
O hypocrite, renounce and abandon your hypocrisy:
do not practise deception.
Constantly, continually, chant the Name (*Nām*) of the Lord.

Nāmdev, Ādi Granth 973, AGK

Guru Nānak puts it simply:

The Lord's praise is my Gangā and Vārāṇasī:
my soul takes its sacred cleansing bath there.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 358, AGK

Dwārakā. An ancient city of Saurāshṭra situated on the coast of western India, associated with the life of Kṛishṇa, and regarded by Hindus as one of the holiest places of pilgrimage. Dādū expresses sadness that although God is so close, human beings still seek Him outside:

God is so close, O Dādū,
yet man knows it not.
Out of touch with the *guru's Shabd*,
he wanders lost and alone...
He thinks that God is far,
and far does He remain.
But He, in truth, is here, there, everywhere...

Without the (inner) eye He cannot be seen:
that is why He seems far away.
Some seek Him in Dwārakā, and some in Kāshī,
others seek in Mathurā, not knowing that He is within.

God dwells in every man,
but rare is he who knows it;
He alone knows God, who loves God.

*Dādū Dayāl, Kastūriyā mrig ko ang 31:4, 6, 8–9,
DDBI pp.228–29; cf. in TPCS pp.27–28*

And the scholar and devotee Bhāī Gurdās (C16th–17th) lists many of those places held sacred in India in his day, saying that – spiritually – a pilgrimage to all of them together is not worth one moment at the feet of a perfect master. Bhāī Gurdās would have had plenty of time to assess the merits of being in the company of a true master, for he was the nephew and disciple of the third Sikh *guru*, living until the time of the sixth *guru*:

The Gangā, Sarasvatī, Yamunā and Godāvarī,
Gayā, Prayāg, Set, Kurukshetra and Mānasarovar,
Kāshī, Kāñchī, Dwārakā, Mathurā and Ayodhyā,
Gomtī, Avantikā, and snow-bound Kedārnāth,
Narmadā, various forests, sacred spots and Kailāsh,
the blue Mandrāchal and Mount Sumer,
sacred spots, wealth, truth, righteousness,
compassion and contentment –
None of them are equal
to the dust of the master's feet.

Bhāī Gurdās, Kabī Savaiye 416

Gayā. An ancient place in the state of Bihar where Buddha is said to have attained *nirvāṇa*. Since then it has become a Buddhist place of pilgrimage, but it is said that from before his time it had been regarded by the Hindus as a holy place, where they performed rites for the benefit of departed ancestors.

Mystics see little spiritual benefit in such pilgrimages. As Bulleh Shah writes:

By going to Mecca, the mystery is not solved,
so long as the ego is not eliminated.
By going to the Gangā, the mystery is not solved,
though you may take a hundred dips in it.
By going to Gayā, the mystery is not solved,
though you may offer many rice cakes at funerals.
O Bullah, the mystery will be solved
only when the 'I' is completely eliminated.

Bulleh Shāh, Kullīyāt, in Qānūn-i 'Ishq, QIAR p.272; cf. BSPS pp.464–65

And likewise, Nāmdēv:

Pilgrimages to the Gangā, Gayā and the Godāvarī
are the affairs of the worldly men.
If the Lord be pleased with Nāma,
then alone shall he be His true servant.

Nāmdev, Ādi Granth 1195–96, MMS

Hardwār. *Lit.* the door (*dwār*) of God (*Hari*); a place of Hindu pilgrimage about 100 miles north-east of Delhi. It is from Hardwār that the Ganges, arising in the Himalayas, gathering volume, flows out as a great and powerful river into the plains of India. Many orthodox Hindus throw the cremated remains of their departed relatives into the Ganges at Hardwār, believing that this will secure their salvation. Mystics say that the real door of the Lord is within:

Those who listen with their mind and ears
to the Lord's meditative remembrance (*simran*)
are blessed with peace at the Lord's gate (*Har duār*).

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 200, AGK

Jagannāth Puri. *Lit.* city (*puri*) of the Lord (*Nāth*) of the universe (*jagat*); a city in the state of Orissa, also called *Puri*, regarded as sacred by Hindus because of the gigantic and celebrated idol of *Jagannāth* (Kṛishṇa) that is installed in a temple there. *Jagannāth* is an epithet of *Vishṇu* or Kṛishṇa. Kṛishṇa is considered to be one of the incarnations of *Vishṇu*.

During the annual festival, the idol is carried through the city on a huge chariot with scores, probably hundreds, of wheels. It is said that, in the past, some devotees would throw themselves under the wheels in the belief that they would go straight to paradise. The word 'juggernaut' is an anglicized corruption of *Jagannāth*.

Kāñchī. The golden city; presently known as Kāñchīpuram; one of the seven major holy cities of India, about forty-five miles south of Chennai; called the Vārāṇasī of South India, sacred to both Shaivites and Vishnaivites.

Kāñchī became a major city when the Pallava dynasty of kings made it their capital. From the fourth to the ninth centuries CE, the Pallavas made Kāñchī a celebrated centre of art and architecture. According to ancient chronicles, there were a thousand temples dedicated to both *Shiva* and *Vishṇu*, and ten thousand shrines built by the Pallavas and the later Vijayanagara dynasty. The temple of Kāmākshī, dedicated to the consort of *Shiva* is said to contain the *samādhi* (burial place) of the ninth-century philosopher-mystic Shankarāchārya, although it is also believed that Shankarāchārya died in the Himalayan village of Kedārnāth. The head of a monastery in Kāñchī (*Kāñchī Kāmakoṭī Pīṭham*) is known to this day by the title of Shankarāchārya.

Kāñchī is the site of the *prithvī linga* (earth symbol), one of the five great *lingas* of India. Kāñchī was once a Buddhist stronghold, reputedly visited by

the Buddha himself, and the site of several Ashoken stupas (domed buildings housing Buddhist relics), which no longer exist. The Chinese pilgrim Xuánzàng (b. 602 CE) mentions a number of Buddhist stupas erected by the Emperor Ashoka. Kāñchī was for some time also associated with the Jains.

Kedārnāth. A place of Hindu pilgrimage in Uttar Pradesh, among the permanent snows of the Himalayas.

Mathurā. A city in the northern province of Uttar Pradesh, situated on the banks of the river Yamunā. Mathurā is said to be the birthplace of Kṛishṇa and the scene of his childhood, and is consequently considered holy and a place of pilgrimage, though it is uncertain whether or not Kṛishṇa was a historical or mythological character. Either way, Dādū says that God is within, not in places of pilgrimage:

Some run to Dwārakā,
some repair to Kāshī,
some go to Mathurā;
But, says Dādū, the Lord resides within.

Dādū, Bānī I, Sāch ko ang 147, DDB1 p.140; cf. DCMU p.164

Pushkara. A natural lake situated three miles from Ajmer in Rajasthan; a famous place of Hindu pilgrimage where, according to the *Purāṇas*, *Brahma* performed a *yagya* (sacrifice). A temple dedicated to *Brahmā* is located on the banks of Pushkara. It is also said that Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh *guru*, stopped there during the course of a journey to the south.

Rāmeshwaram. An island about thirty miles long and seven miles wide off the southernmost tip of India, between India and Sri Lanka; one of the four most important *tīrthas* or places of Hindu pilgrimage, the other three being *Jagannāth Puri* in the east, *Badrināth* in the north, and *Dwārakā* in the west.

According to the *Rāmāyaṇa*, the town was founded by Rāma while making preparations for war against Rāvaṇa, king of Lankā, who had abducted his wife, Sītā. After killing Rāvaṇa, Rāma returned to Rāmeshwaram. In order to purify himself, he set up a *Shiva linga* to worship. The famous temple at Rāmeshwaram with three thousand columns, built by a *Pāṇḍya* king includes, it is believed, the original *linga* set up by Rāma. The *linga* is worshipped and washed daily with water brought from the Ganges. This water, being considered sacred, is then sold to pilgrims. Many houses in South India keep this water to give spiritual benefit to those who are dying.

Rishikesh. A place of Hindu pilgrimage near Hardwār, in North India.

Vṛindāvan. A legendary forest situated by the river Yamunā, near Mathurā, just south of Delhi; the place where Kṛishṇa passed his childhood. According to mythology, it is here that Kṛishṇa played with the *gopīs*, the cowherding maidens, and especially with Rādhā. The play of Kṛishṇa and Rādhā is known as Kṛishṇa *līlā*, and symbolizes the divine play of the soul with God. Rādhā

represents the soul, and Kṛishṇa, God. Vṛindāvan is particularly sacred for the *Vaiṣṇavas* (followers of *Vishṇu*), because Kṛishṇa is considered the eighth incarnation of *Vishṇu*. Vṛindāvan is believed to have been a replica of the supreme *goloka vṛindāvana* located in the spiritual sky, the dwelling place of Kṛishṇa. Vṛindāvan is now a populous place with many beautiful temples dedicated to Kṛishṇa.

Rivers

Indian rivers¹ are usually considered sacred when they have been associated at some time with a hero, a deity, a *ṛishi* or a *guru* mentioned in one or other of India's great religious classics. Each river has its own mythological history. When a god was happy with a king or with the people of some kingdom, then he would bless them by starting a river in that region, so that they could flourish and prosper. Alternatively, in times of drought, severe austerities were made to appease the gods. If the gods were pleased, then there would be rainfall; and if the gods were very pleased, then they would start a river as a boon. Consequently, the Indian people deem these rivers to be holy, since they have been given by the gods.

Rivers are also life-savers in the great heat of the Indian summer, providing water for drinking and the production of fertile crops. During the seasonal monsoon floods, rich alluvial soil is brought down by the rivers from the mountain ranges, without which India would be a desert.

Gangā, Ganges. India's longest and most sacred river (1,557 miles), with many places of pilgrimage on its banks, especially Vārāṇasī. Rising in two headstreams in the Himalayas, it flows southeast to Allāhabād, where it is joined by the Yamunā, continuing eastwards into Bangladesh where it enters the Bay of Bengal in an extensive delta. *Gangā* is also personified as a goddess, to be worshipped.

According to mythology, *Gangā*, the elder daughter of *Himavān* – the personification or god of the Himalayas – was a holy river which encircled the city of Brahmā on the summit of Mount Meru. She was brought down to earth through the efforts of Bhagīratha, grandson of Sagara, king of Ayodhyā.

Sagara had one son, Asamañjasa, from one wife, and sixty thousand from another. Sagara decided to perform the *ashvamedha-yajña* (horse sacrifice) to assert his universal dominion and to humble *Indra*. *Indra* took the form of a demon and drove the horse to *pātāla* (nether regions) where it was seen by Sagara's sons grazing near the hermitage of the sage Kapila. Because of their arrogance and misdemeanour, and their intention to seize Kapila and disturb his meditation, *Vishṇu* burnt the sixty thousand sons of Sagara. Sagara then sent his grandson Anshumān to find out what had happened. Pleased with his respectful behaviour, Kapila told him, adding that his uncles could be brought back to life if the waters of *Gangā* were made to descend to the earth and flow over their ashes in *pātāla*.

Despite strenuous effort, Sagara and, after him, Anshumān and his son Dilīpa, could not succeed in bringing down the waters of the Gangā. However, Dilīpa's son Bhagīratha, a powerful ascetic, performed such austerities that *Brahmā* ordered an unwilling Gangā to descend to earth.

Realizing through *Brahmā*'s warning that she would fall so heavily as to cause great destruction, Bhagīratha propitiated *Shiva* through further penance, and *Shiva* broke the violence of her fall on Mount Kailāsha by catching her waters in his tangled hair. Gangā emerged from them in seven separate streams, one of them being the river *Ganges*.

Gangā followed Bhagīratha and flowed into a huge crater that had been gouged out from the earth by Sagara's sons, thus forming the ocean that was named *Sāgara*. She then seeped down into *pātāla*, and moistened the ashes of Sagara's sons. Thus purified, they were released for admission into *svarga*.

Though all the seven rivers are said to be branches of the original Gangā, other origins are also attributed to some of them. Yamunā is also identified with *Yamī*, the twin sister of *Yama* (Death), and various origins are also given to Sarasvatī.

Bearing in mind the deeply religious character of the Indian people, Indian mystics have been consistent in their use of pithy language to point out the ineffectiveness of pilgrimage from the viewpoint of finding God. They have indicated that the true place of pilgrimage is within; it is there that God is to be found and worshipped. Sulṭān Bāhū pokes gentle fun at those who would wash their sins away:

If God could be found by bathing in holy waters,
frogs and fish would find Him.

Sulṭān Bāhū, Bait 63, SBU p.378, SBE p.272

Guru Rāmdās writes that, far from the Ganges bestowing purity, the waters of the Ganges themselves actively seek to absorb the dust of the feet of true holy men in order to obtain purification:

Gangā, Yamunā, Godāvarī and Sarasvatī
seek the dust of feet of the man of God (*sādhū*).

Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 1263, AGT

Guru Arjun says that the true holy water is the living water of the "Name of the Lord":

The Name of the Lord is the holy water of the Gangā:
whoever meditates on it is saved.

Drinking it in, the mortal does not wander in reincarnation again.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1137, AGK

The Ganges has also been used symbolically as a name for *idā*, one of the three currents that converge in the realm of the universal mind, known to some Indian mystics as *trikuṭī*. The second current is *pingalā*, symbolized as the river Yamunā. Mystics travel upwards on the current that flows between the two, the *sushumṇā*:

Trikuṭī is at the junction of Gangā and Yamunā.
A dazzling light burns there,
where I remain absorbed.

Bullā Sāhib, Shabd kā sār, Shabd 5:2, BSSS p.4

I took my seat between Gangā and Yamunā,
where all is brightness.
Then, seated firmly in *bhanwar guphā*
I saw a brightness greater still.

Sahajobāī, Bānī, Mishrit pad, Rāg sorṭhā 2:3, SBB p.49

Sarasvatī. An ancient river of northwest India, personified as the Hindu goddess *Sarasvatī*, who is associated with learning and eloquence. The present-day *Sarasvatī* loses itself in the sands of Patialā at Vinashana (‘disappearance’) in the Punjab. Owing to the extreme aridity of the region, combined with the sand-drifting action of the south-west monsoon winds, only its almost dried-up river-bed remains. According to Hindu folklore, the river does not end in Patiala, it only disappears from view. Continuing its course underground, it joins the Ganges and Yamunā at their junction near Allāhabād, known as *Prayāg*.

Of the twenty-five rivers mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, the *Sarasvatī* appears to have been the most revered, held to be as sacred by the people of those days as the Ganges is today. It is described as the “best mother, best of rivers, best of goddesses”.²

Eastern mystics, especially of the ancient past, have often used geographical names for the inner realms. Hence, the central of the three currents, known as *sushumṇā* flowing up from below has been called *Sarasvatī*. Dariyā Sāhib of Bihar writes of these currents as they flow into *trikuṭī*, the realm of the universal mind, and then altogether out of the realms of the mind into the pure spiritual realm of *sunṇ*, and beyond:

Here is the water of the Ganges and Yamunā,
on the bank bordering *trikuṭī*.
Here is the pure current of the *Sarasvatī*,
where the soul drinks in the ecstasy of love.
Here, a resounding thunder is heard in the sky,
and torrential rain falls in splendour on all sides.

Here, drops fall continuously,
and you rise from earth with attention inverted.
Here is the chirping of crickets.

Passing by the sound of musical instruments,
you reach the peak of the *sun*n (region),
where the melodious lute is played.

Then you reach the region
where the *vīṇā* plays night and day.

Only a brave saint can reach here.

There, with the divine eye, you behold the white banner,
whereby all illusion is destroyed.

Dariyā Sāhib, Gyān dīpak, GDDS p.124; cf. DSSK pp.173–74

Godāvarī. A major river of central India, about 900 miles long, rising in the Western Ghats at Tryambak in Maharashtra, and flowing southeast to reach the sea in the Bay of Bengal, breaking up into an extensive delta, joined by a canal to that of the river Kṛishṇa to the south.

The Godāvarī is held sacred by the Hindus, due to its proximity to the forest of Daṇḍaka in whose groves Rāma and Sītā found refuge for some time during their exile, in the epic story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Several places of pilgrimage are situated upon its banks.

Gomtī. A tributary of the Ganges on its northern bank, west of the city of Vārāṇasī in the province of Uttar Pradesh, in the state of Oudh; it rises in the foothills of Uttar Pradesh, east of Pilibhit.

One of India's sacred rivers due to its appearance in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, where it is mentioned three times. Firstly, when the sage Manu bathed in its waters, later reincarnating as Dasharatha, Rāma's father. Secondly, when Rāma paused with his wife, mother and courtiers on his way to exile occasioned by his jealous stepmother, Kaikeyī. Thirdly, when Rāma's brother Bharata and his companions, having taken leave of Rāma, re-crossed the Gomtī on their return to their capital, Ayodhyā.

Narmadā (S), Narbadā (H). A river of central India, rising in Madhya Pradesh, flowing generally west, and emptying through a wide estuary into the Gulf of Cambay, to the south of Barodā; India's fifth longest river, 801 miles in length; the second most sacred river in India. Much religious mythology is associated with the Narbadā. It is regarded as so sacred that some pilgrims and *sādhus* make the 1,600-mile journey on foot from its outlet into the Arabian Sea at Bharuch in Gujarat, upriver to its source in the Maikal mountains, and back along the opposite bank. In this way, in keeping with the traditions of *parikramā* (circumambulation), the river is always on their right hand side. Indian saints have remained unimpressed by the supposed sacredness of outer places. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh says:

It is a pity that the supreme Lord and gracious Creator, who has created the world with all its beautiful forms, and endowed man with this superior body, should be worshipped in metal and stone, in water of rivers like Gangā, Yamunā, and Narbadā; in trees and plants like *pīpal* and *tulsī*; or in animals like cows, monkeys, and serpents.... Not to seek the true God, but to worship His creation as God Himself, and to worship the things which man himself has made; how much does it speak for the negligence, ignorance and carelessness of the people?

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan 1:35, SBAT pp.20–21

Yamunā (S), Jumnā (H). A river of North India, rising in the Himalayas in the state of Uttar Pradesh, and flowing southeast, joining the Ganges at Allāhabād; 860 miles in length; often identified with *Yamī*, the sister of *Yama* (Death).

India has innumerable other places of pilgrimage, often associated with particular deities or holy men. *Pañjā Sāhib*, for instance, is a Sikh place of pilgrimage in Ḥasan Abdāl, twenty-nine miles from Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan), where Guru Nānak is said to have stopped a huge boulder from rolling down the hill, leaving the imprint of his palm upon it. A spring of pure water flows nearby, and a famous *gurdwāra* has been built there. *Pañjā* means the ‘palm of the hand’.

Buddhist Pilgrimage Sites

Pilgrimage sites are no less abundant in the Buddhist world. India, Sri Lanka, China, Japan, Thailand and other Buddhist countries contain many centres of pilgrimage, often attracting international pilgrims. Pilgrimages may be undertaken as a means of accumulating merit (*puṇya*) and good *karma* or in the hope of fulfilling some desire. They may be made as the result of a vow, to breathe life into beliefs concerning those who are venerated at pilgrimage sites or to seek their blessing and protection, or simply as a quest for deeper spiritual inspiration and understanding. Buddhist pilgrimage is an ancient practice, and many Buddhist texts speak of the pilgrimages undertaken by Buddhist monks of old. These often consisted of journeys made for teaching purposes.

According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha himself recommends the places of his birth, enlightenment, first sermon, and death as suitable pilgrimage sites:

There are four places, Ānanda, that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. What are the four? “Here the Tathāgata was born!” ... “Here the Tathāgata became fully enlightened in unsurpassed, supreme enlightenment!” ... “Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of the *Dhamma*!” ... “Here the Tathāgata passed away into the state of *nibbāna* in which no element of clinging remains!” ...

These, Ānanda, are the four places that a pious person should visit and look upon with feelings of reverence. And truly there will come to these places, Ānanda, pious *bhikkhus* and *bhikkhunīs*, laymen and laywomen, reflecting: “Here the Tathāgata was born! *Etc.*” ... And whoever, Ānanda, should die on such a pilgrimage with his heart established in faith, at the breaking up of the body, after death, will be reborn in a realm of heavenly happiness (*saggaloka*).

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTS2 pp.140–41, DNVS

The four places, all in the same northeastern area of the subcontinent, are Lumbinī, the Buddha’s place of birth, now in Nepal; Bodhgāya in the state of Bihar, where he attained enlightenment; Isipatana (now Sārnāth), not far from Vārāṇasī in Uttar Pradesh, where he started his teaching; and Kusinārā, also in Uttar Pradesh, where he died. In the same *sutta*, he also gives instructions for his remains to be placed in a stupa (S. *stūpa*, Pa. *thūpa*, a domed construction for housing relics), saying that anyone who visits a stupa with reverence will find benefit and happiness for a long time after and be reborn in a heavenly world.³

Four other places closely associated with the life of the Buddha have become pilgrimage sites:

Sāvattī. One of the largest cities in India in the time of the Buddha, where he gave many discourses; also the site of a famous legend in which the Buddha is said to have “performed the twin miracle, emitting streams of fire and water simultaneously from each pore of his body”, and at the same time “taught the *Dhamma* to the assembly” as an answer to some vociferous sceptics who had challenged him to perform a miracle.⁴ Following the incident, the Buddha ascended to the paradise of *tāvatiṃsa devaloka* (heaven of the thirty-three deities), where he remained for three months, preaching the *Abhidhamma* (deeply analytical texts) to his deceased mother and a multitude of *devas* (deities).⁵ The story is related in Buddhaghosa’s fifth-century (CE) commentary on the *Dhammapada*, written around one thousand years after the Buddha’s death. The account given in the earlier *Cūlavagga* of the *Vinaya Piṭaka* (monastic code) is less elaborate and ends with the Buddha admonishing the monks who had started the furore by a display of miracles not to make an exhibition of their higher powers. In that account, the Buddha himself performs no miracle.

Sankassa. The place where the Buddha is said to have descended from *tāvatiṃsa*. Again, the incident is not mentioned in the Pali canon. Buddhaghosa, writing around one thousand years later, places Sankassa at a distance of around one hundred miles from Sāvattī.⁶

Rājagaha. Now Rājgir in modern Bihar; according to the Pali canon, a place frequented by the Buddha, and where, according to another Buddhist legend, his cousin Devadatta, who had been jealous of the Buddha since

childhood and had formed a breakaway movement, tried to murder the Buddha by persuading the mahouts from the royal stables to loose a fierce elephant directly into the Buddha's path. On coming face to face with the elephant, the Buddha, radiating lovingkindness (*mettā*) to the animal, raised his right hand in a sign of peace (the *abhaya-mudrā*). This immediately calmed the beast, allowing the Buddha to walk up to it and stroke its head.

Vesālī or **Vaishālī**. Mentioned in the Pali canon as another of the places where the Buddha often taught; the scene of a number of incidents from Buddhist history and legend. According to the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, the Buddha stayed at Vesālī, in the mango grove of the courtesan Ambapālī. After meeting the Buddha and listening to his teachings, Ambapālī donated her grove to the *sangha* and received instruction into the *Dhamma*, rather than accept any money from the Buddha for the use of her property.⁷ Vesālī was also the place of the Second Council, held around one hundred years after the Buddha's departure, where the monks assembled to decide upon ten minor rules in the monastic code, such as handling money and eating after noon. The Council was also the setting for the first schism in the *sangha*, between the *Sthaviras* and the *Mahāsāṃghikas*, although the cause of the dispute is uncertain.

Vesālī is also close to Beluva, the small village where the Buddha passed the last rains retreat before he died,⁸ having sent his disciples to pass the retreat at Vesālī. According to Buddhist legend, of later origin than the Pali canon, Vesālī is also the place where a troupe of monkeys excavated a small lake for the Buddha's use and presented him with a dish of honey, an incident regarded as one of the Buddha's four great miracles.

The most popular pilgrimage sites throughout the Buddhist world are those associated with the Buddha's life or with stupas containing some relic, together with those places associated with revered *bodhisattvas*. Among these many pilgrimage places is the *Sri Dalada Maligawa* ('Temple of the Tooth') at Kandy in Sri Lanka, the location of a tooth relic of the Buddha. There is also a six-foot long depression on the top of Mount Siripāda, also in Sri Lanka, believed to be a footprint made by the Buddha (of which there are others in the Buddhist world) when he flew to the island for teaching purposes, using his miraculous powers. In a spirit of sharing not unknown in the world of shrines and pilgrimage sites, Hindus revere the same footprint as belonging to the deity *Shiva*, while Muslims take it to be that of Adam.

There are also several places, such as Bodhgāya in Bihar, where pilgrims venerate a tree that is regarded as a descendant of the original *bodhi* tree (a pipal tree, *Ficus religiosa*) beneath which the Buddha is believed to have received enlightenment. Its ancient and weighty limbs are propped up, prayer flags adorn its branches, and fallen leaves are eagerly gathered by pilgrims as treasured keepsakes.

In China, Buddhist pilgrims visit the four sacred mountains, each associated with a different *bodhisattva* and one of the four cardinal directions:

Mount	Province	Bodhisattva	Virtue	Direction
Wǔtái shān	Shānxī	Wénshū (S. Mañjuśrī)	great wisdom	North
Éméi shān	Sìchuān	Pǔxián (S. Samantabhadra)	great conduct	West
Pǔtúo shān	Zhèjiāng	Guānyīn (S. Avalokiteshvara)	great compassion	East
Jiuhuá shān	Ānhuī	Dìzàng (S. Kshitigarbha)	great vows	South

In Japan, pilgrims visit the island of Shikoku, which has eighty-eight temples associated with the Japanese monk Kūkai (774–835), founder of the *Shingon* school of esoteric Buddhism; and Saikoku, which has thirty-three temples consecrated to the *bodhisattva* Avalokiteshvara (J. Kannon).⁹

Jain Pilgrimage Sites

Like Hinduism and Buddhism, Jainism also has its sites (*tīrthas*) of pilgrimage (*yātrā*), and pilgrimage has been commonly practised by monks and laypeople alike. There are several kinds of Jain pilgrimage site: places believed to have been where Mahāvīra or others among the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* attained liberation and enlightenment (*nirvāṇa-bhūmi*, *nirvāṇa-kshetra*, place of enlightenment); places believed to have been where a *kevalin* (omniscient one) attained liberation and enlightenment (*siddha-kshetra*, place of supreme attainment); and places where there are well-known images or idols of a tutelary (protective) deity or where miracles are believed to have happened in the lives of renowned monks (*atīshaya-kshetra*, excellent place). Temples or shrines have usually been built at all such places. Going on pilgrimage or organizing pilgrimages for others are deemed to earn great merit (*puṇya*), which in turn helps to remove from the soul the karmic matter that stands in the way of liberation. Unlike Hindu pilgrimage sites, although *tīrtha* refers to a ford or river crossing, no Jain sites are regarded as holy purely because of their association with water.¹⁰

As in other Indian texts, it is said that the presence of a Jain monk or nun who is well-known for his or her holiness renders a site temporarily sacred, and they are therefore sometimes described as ‘walking *tīrthas*’:

According to the Jain path, he whose religion, faith, self-control, austerity and knowledge are free from taint, if he is also possessed of mental calm, he is a *tīrtha*.

Kundakunda, *Aṣṭapāhuḍa* 4:27; cf. *APAK*

The term *tīrtha* also refers to the fourfold Jain community (*sangha*) of monks (*sādhus*), nuns (*sādhvīs*), laymen (*shrāvakas*), and laywomen (*shrāvikās*).

Jain pilgrimage sites, many of which date back a thousand years or more, include: Pāvāpurī in Bihar, the place of Mahāvīra’s liberation, also containing an impression believed to be his footprint; the *Digambara* temple at Hombuja in Karnataka, dedicated to the goddess *Padmāvatī* – the *yakshī* (semi-divine

being) of the twenty-third *Tīrthankara*, Pārshvanātha – which houses an image of the *yakshī* that is believed to possess miraculous powers; Mount Sammeta (in Jharkhand, formerly Bihar, where Pārshvanātha and nineteen other *Tīrthankaras* are said to have attained liberation); Mūḍbidrī in Karnataka, where eighteen *Digambara* temples have been built, one of which – built in 1429 – is dedicated to Chandraprabha, the eighth *Tīrthankara* of the present era; Mathurā, in Uttar Pradesh, where the monk Jambu is traditionally believed to have attained omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) – the last to have done so during the present era; Mahāvīrjī, a *Digambara* site east of Jaipur in Rajasthan, noted for a temple containing an image of Mahāvīra; Shravaṇa Belgola, where tens of thousands of Jains assemble every twelve years or so for the anointing of the head of a huge image of Bāhubali, son of Ādinātha, with red and yellow powders, sandalwood paste, milk, and pure water.

There are also the *Shvetāmbara* temples at Mount Shatruñjaya in Gujarat, where Ādinātha (*aka.* Ṛishabha), the first *Tīrthankara* of the current era, as well as Rāma, Sītā, the Pāṇḍava brothers and their mother, Kuntī are all said to have attained liberation; Mount Gīrnār also in Gujarat, where there are sixteen temples, the place where Neminātha, the twenty-second *Tīrthankara*, renounced the world, and attained omniscience and liberation; Mount Ābū in Rajasthan, where there are four temples; and Rāṇakpur in Rajasthan, the site of an ornate temple in white marble, commissioned in 1391 by a wealthy merchant and minister to Rāna Kumbha, said to have been styled after a dream he had experienced of the assembly hall of Ādinātha in the mythological island-universe of *Nandīshvara*.

See also: **chaitya**, **stūpa**, **triveṇī** (4.1), **yātrā**.

1. See Veronica Ions, *Indian Mythology*, IMVI pp.109–10.
2. *Ṛig Veda* 2:41.16.
3. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.141–43.
4. *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* 14:2, PTSDA3 pp.199–230, DCBP pp.117–18; cf. BLD3 pp.35–56.
5. See **yamaka-pāṭihāriya** (7.3).
6. *Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā* 14:2, PTSDA3 p.224.
7. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 pp.94–98.
8. *Dīgha Nikāya* 16, *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta*, PTSD2 p.99.
9. See “pilgrimage,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB.
10. See “pilgrimage,” “tīrtha,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

tokotauwaka (Mo) *Lit.* a learning stick used in *whare kura* (house of esoteric learning) of the Kāi Tahu tribe of New Zealand’s South Island; a mnemonic device for recalling long genealogies, *karakia* (incantations), and so forth.

The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson describes its origin and design:

The *tokotauwaka* was a major part of the Kāi Tahu way of learning *tohunga-tanga* (priestly knowledge). Its practice came from Hawaiki (Hawaii, ancestral material and spiritual homeland) and it formed the entire order of learning by which the student was educated in the ancient knowledge. There is no limit to the use and purity of this training method, and its hidden meanings are taken far in the higher grades of the *Io* priesthood.

This special stick goes beyond its use as a learning tool, as it also represents the unfolding of the universe.

The design of the *tokotauwaka* is fairly basic. It is a stick about sixty centimetres in length. Upon the top of the stick is an oval-shaped figure representing the brilliant arc of the rainbow. The inside of the oval is hollow, forming the body into a loop. This head figure is said to be *Kahukura*, the rainbow god of Māori. On the front side of the rainbow loop are four more holes running through one below the other. Therefore, there are five holes in total including the large hole, present in the rainbow loop. The full symbolism of it was kept for the initiates of the *Io* priesthood.

Along the shaft of the *tokotauwaka*, grooves are cut so that eighteen knobs protrude down its body. Each groove running along its shaft serves to recount one stage in a chant or genealogy. There are two points of evidence supporting the *tokotauwaka* method of learning. Firstly, it can be likened to the old method of recounting family genealogies with *tokotoko* or walking sticks, used by respected elderly Māori men of status. An elderly man may use his *tokotoko* to correctly recount the names of his family's *whakapapa* (genealogy). The *tokotauwaka* is also a godstick for *Kahukura*, like the *whakapakoko* of other *atua*. . . . The walking stick has several knobs running down it, representing the names of ancestors, while the last knob represents the elderly man as the current representative of the family line.

The tradition of counting genealogies can also be found elsewhere in Polynesia. The people of the Marquesas Islands similarly taught the method to *tohunga* in a *whare wānanga*. These particular Polynesians also speak a dialect of Māori very close to that of the South Island Māori from where I learnt the *tokotauwaka* method. In the Marquesan school genealogies were learnt and taught by experts called *o'ono* or *orongo*. Such experts used a device of twined coconut fibre named the *ta'o-mata*. Attached to it were long cords with several knots, each representing the various generations in a genealogy. Like the *tokotauwaka*, it served to aid memorization of family and creation genealogies.

The *tokotauwaka* works in much the same way. The eighteen grooves are used to recall ancient wisdom held in the old creation chants. The old Māori teachings explain that this is the best way to learn; as even a blind elderly man by feeling his way over the knobs will be able to recall the knowledge. Thus it is ensured that from the older generation the knowledge and recitals are passed on to the next generation.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.111–12

The knobs and grooves in the *tokotauwaka* represent stages in the manifestation of creation from *Io*, the supreme God:

After attending the *tūāhu* shrine the newly initiated *akoako* (student) is entrusted with *karakia* to recite. In learning the chant students are shown a *tokotauwaka* method of learning.

For learning purposes in the *whare mauri* (school of the life force), the learning stick was not of any permanent design. A student made his own *tokotauwaka* by simply engraving eighteen grooves down the body of an ordinary stick. The *tokotauwaka* of the *akoako* does not have the rainbow loop upon it and was sometimes referred to as a *mairekura*.

A proper *tokotauwaka* is *tapu*, being reserved for expert high priests only. The full knowledge of the rainbow head was not taught or used in the outer grades; instead *akoako* used this plain stick. While a true *tokotauwaka* could be seen by students, they were merely told that “the head is *Kahukura* the rainbow *atua*.” The other parts of a *tokotauwaka*, such as its loop and the holes in its head, are ignored in the *whare mauri* training.

Later on in the career of the *tohunga*, when the *karakia* are firmly fixed in his heart, a proper *tokotauwaka* might be made so as to store power. *Kahukura* is the rainbow god symbolizing light and attracts the same into the stick. *Mana* (energy, power) is also bound into the meanings of each *karakia*. As the chants are recited along its shaft the *mana* is left in the stick. You may have now worked out that the primary *whare mauri* chants each have eighteen stages to recall. These chants are about creation.

The *mana* within the genealogy chants are a living fire and the words of the chants are an ancient fire that never dies. The sounds of the words make a fire in the realm of the spirit. Thus the tool gains power when used over time because the *mana* of the creation chants becomes stored up in it. When learning the proper order of creation, the universe unravels down the shaft of the *tokotauwaka* as the *karakia* strikes the aeons out. These ideas are contemplated upon while meditating with the stick held in the hand.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.113

Like any subject, the stages of creation described in the *karakia* had to be learnt:

During the actual teaching of chants in the *whare mauri* the students took turns at reciting the *karakia* back to their teachers. I used to sit under a tree to recite mine to get it right.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.113

The *tokotauwaka* has uses other than that of learning Māori lore by rote:

The *tokotauwaka* itself is employed beyond the use of learning *karakia*. This tool, above all else, represents light presiding over the world of humankind.

Its head, symbolizing *Kahukura*, bridges the void between the heavens and the earth, uniting them as one. The *tokotauwaka* therefore links the spiritual to man. In the hand of an expert, it becomes a rod by which the *tohunga* invokes spiritual powers. With the divine rainbow atop, it symbolizes Divinity ruling the world of humankind as creation manifests throughout its lower layers. By this we admit and affirm that Divinity rules over the lower layers and ourselves, to remind us that it is not us that rule the earth. At the foot of the *tokotauwaka* lies the earth, here symbolizing the rainbow's authority and that of *Io* over *Papatūānuku* ('Earth Mother') and her elements.

In the rituals of the *tohunga* the *tokotauwaka* serves to attract that higher power it represents. To Māori nothing can compare to the beauty of the rainbow, which is seen as a manifestation of *Io* and all things that are good. When the *tohunga* holds this rod in hand, the *mana* is drawn to him and he is able to direct the forces with it. Its head attracts light and power while the rod becomes its directing agent. This is why only an experienced person may wield this powerful object, and why the *akoako* made mock rods for *tokotauwaka* during the course of training.

The *tohunga* raises the *tokotauwaka* to the sky, offering it to the gods, showing that this object belongs to the heavens. He says *karakia* with its head facing upwards while attracting the *mana* or spiritual force and then directs it towards the people.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.114–15

The *tokotauwaka* was also an integral part of the training and initiation of a student *tohunga*, especially as an aid to the recitation of long *karakia* and the twenty-three names of *Io*, the supreme Being.

See also: **initiation (in Māori tradition)** (7.4), **whakapakoko rākau**.

totem (Ojibwa, *totam*) An emblem, generally, a bird or animal, regarded as being of special significance to a particular individual, family, or tribe.

Inasmuch as they organized their tribes into groups identified with different animals, Native Americans affirmed their deep immersion in the mysteries of the natural world. To claim a special kinship with the wolf or eagle, the bear or crow, was to think of one's group as drawing much of its identity from the animal powers of one's habitat.

The totem did not mean that the group sought to imitate the wolf or eagle slavishly. It did not mean that only the wolf or eagle was important to either individuals or the entire group. It simply meant that certain features of the totemic animal bore a spiritual significance for the group whom it singled out. The intelligence of the wolf, or the glory of the high-flying eagle, or the homely reliability of the muskrat was a virtue to take to heart. The relations among the different totemic animals was mysterious. Who could say with any precision what comparisons between wolves and eagles were best? The point was not to argue for the superiority of one's own totem. The point was to use the spiritual significance of one's totem as an entry to the wonderful world of intimacy with all the animals of creation.

Denise & John Carmody, Native American Religions, NARC p.226

Totem poles,¹ often as high as a small tree and made from a tree trunk, especially the western red or giant cedar (*Thuja plicata*), are large poles or posts elaborately carved and painted with a variety of symbolic designs. These can represent clan lineages, animals in the primordial past from which a clan is believed to have descended, cultural myths and legends and historical events, or they can simply be an expression of artistry. Much also depends upon an individual's ability to interpret the symbols. The belief that a clan is descended from a particular animal ancestor is not widespread, and in many instances a totem animal is regarded as a guardian spirit of a clan's ancestral father. There is normally a clan taboo against killing the totem animal.

Totem poles are a feature of the native nations of the Pacific Northwest, reaching as far north as Alaska. Common locations are in front of a home or at the entrance to a village. In present times, totem poles are also erected for the benefit of tourists.

Despite the rot-resistant nature of red cedar, few poles earlier than 1900 remain in existence. Totem poles may be built into the interior design of a house, may be created in memory of a deceased person, can be used to shame or ridicule a debtor or someone who has otherwise caused offence, and in rare instances may be used as a form of grave marker, with a grave box attached to the back or the ashes of the deceased located in the hollowed-out upper portion of the pole.

The notion of totems is also prevalent in some other indigenous cultures of the world.

1. See “totem pole,” *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2017.

Trinity (Gk. *Trias*, L. *Trinitas*) The union of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost) as three distinct persons (hypostases) in one Godhead, the three being of one nature or essence; the dogmatic formulation of a mystical doctrine, the emphasis being on three distinct persons, not three distinct beings. In the words of the Athanasian Creed: “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.” According to Christian doctrine:

In this Trinity of persons, the Son is begotten of the Father by an eternal generation, and the Holy Spirit proceeds by an eternal procession from the Father and the Son. Yet, notwithstanding this difference as to origin, the persons are co-eternal and co-equal: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent. This, the Church teaches, is the revelation regarding God’s nature which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came upon earth to deliver to the world: and which she proposes to man as the foundation of her whole dogmatic system.

“The Blessed Trinity,” Catholic Encyclopedia, 1912

Richard Rolle explains the metaphors:

The Father is so called because of Himself He has begotten the Son; the Son is so called because he is begotten of the Father; the Holy Spirit because he is the Spirit of both the holy Father and the holy Son.

Richard Rolle, Fire of Love 7; cf. FLML p.36, FLRR p.64

And Maximos the Confessor explains that the matter cannot really be comprehended by the human mind:

While believing that the Trinity exists, the human mind (*nous*) can never presume to grasp what the Trinity is in Its essence, in the way that this is known to the divine Mind (*Nous*)...

With regard to Christ, we do not speak of a distinction of persons, because the Trinity remained a Trinity after the incarnation of the *Logos*. A fourth person was not added to the Holy Trinity as a result of the incarnation. We speak of a distinction of natures to avoid asserting that the flesh is coessential in its nature with the *Logos*.

Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 2:42, 57, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 pp.196, 250

Although the three elements are present in Paul's blessing: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all,"¹ neither the doctrine, nor the word Trinity, appear in the New Testament. The well-known formula also appears in Jesus' instruction to his disciples: "Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."² But whether or not this is a later addition to the original gospel (itself unlikely to contain the exact words of Jesus) is uncertain.

The first recorded use of the term, as the Greek *trias*, is by Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, around 180 CE. The doctrine evolved gradually, over several centuries and with many controversies, through the need to reconcile the belief in one God with the Greek understanding of the *Logos* (Word) as the divine creative power, and of Jesus as the incarnation of the *Logos*, according to the opening verses of John's gospel. The struggle to encapsulate the divine process in concept and word led to a variety of viewpoints, particularly as regards the equality or otherwise of the three 'persons'.

The Eastern Church favoured a view in which the Father was the primary Principle, from whom emanated – by a voluntary act – the Son and the Holy Spirit. But this left the Father as superior to the other two, as effectively created beings. The Western Church argued that the three were one in essential Substance, and that they were thus 'co-equal'.

The matter came to a head at the Council of Nicaea (325), Christianity's first ecumenical council, convened by the unbaptized and politically motivated Emperor Constantine in the hope of uniting the Eastern (championed by Arius) and Western Churches. The council, however, resulted in the condemnation of Arius, leading to the first officially induced schism, and, despite the considerable reservations of others, incorporated the non-scriptural word, *homoousios* (Gk. of one substance), into the creed. This signified the equality of the Son and the Father, though saying little about the Holy Spirit. Constantine then exiled Arius, underlining the part played by political patronage in the formation of fundamental Christian doctrine. Constantine himself, like many others, had found it difficult to understand what all the fuss was about, and had naively assumed that the opposing factions would have been able to come to an agreement. The council also ruled on many other divisive issues within the developing Church.

Over the next seventy-five years, the Nicene formula was further defended and refined, until, by the end of the fourth century, the doctrine of the Trinity had settled into substantially the form it has had ever since.³

Later Christian mystics, choosing the Trinity as a focus of their meditation, believe that they have had visions of the three persons, and have even spoken with them.⁴

From a mystical perspective, it must be said that no mystic has ever suggested that the nature of the Divine, and Its relationship of oneness with both the soul

and the Word, can ever be understood or even adequately expressed in human concepts and language. If God is the creator, He is also the creator of time. Therefore, even the human concept of creation happening at a point in time arises as a result of human limitation. God is the One Being, within whom everything exists, and within whose eternity there is no time. The matter cannot be understood by reason, but only by revelation or mystical experience. Even after revelation, the mystery cannot be adequately explained in human language.

Mystics who teach a universal mysticism simply say that God is the Father of all souls. All and everything has come out of Him, and remains within Him. The means by which He has created everything is His creative power or Word, which is one with Him. The Son of God, in the context of the Trinity, is both the Word and the incarnation of the Word as a master, of whom there have been many, and will be many more.

See also: **Father** (2.1), **incarnation** (7.1), **Son** (7.1), **Word** (3.1).

1. 2 *Corinthians* 13:14, *KJV*.
2. *Matthew* 28:19; cf. *KJV*.
3. See “Trinity,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2001.
4. E.g. Angela of Foligno, *Book of Divine Consolation* 3:6–7, *BDC* pp.181–82; Hadewijch, *Visions* 5, *HCW* p.277; Mechthild of Magdeburg, *Flowing Light* 4:14, *RMM* pp.108–9; Teresa of Ávila, *Interior Castle* 7:1, *CWTA2* pp.331–32; *Testimonies* 16, 18, 24, 33, 47, 56, *CWTA1* pp.342–43, 345, 350, 359, 362.

tūāhu (Mo) *Lit.* outdoor temple or shrine; an area containing an earth or stone mound (*ahu*), which is used as an altar (*ahurewa* or *ahu*); a sacred place, traditionally hidden and allowed to remain in its natural state, used for divination, invoking the help of the *atua* (ancestor deities), and other ceremonies; often regarded as the most *tapu* (sacred, restricted) of all places, dedicated to *Io* the Most Supreme, and used by *tohunga ahurewa* or priestly experts of the highest order.

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931), most of whose information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island, relates something of what he knew about such places:

The student of Māori lore looks in vain for any evidence of the use of temples, altars, or any elaborate or permanent erection used in connection with religious ceremonial in former times. In certain parts of Polynesia, as at the Society and Sandwich Groups (of islands), the Polynesian folk erected massive stone structures and enclosures in connection with their religion, but we look in vain for any such places in New Zealand. Here no form of building was ever erected to serve

as a temple for service of offerings. The places set aside as *tūāhu*, or sacred places, were in some cases, apparently, not marked in any way. Sometimes a rough, unworked stone, or several such stones, were set up at such a place, but otherwise the place would be allowed to remain practically in its natural state. Occasionally, we are told, a small platform of sticks, termed a *tīepa*, was erected at such a place, on which offerings to the gods were placed....

It is interesting to note that there were several differing forms of *tūāhu* in former times. Some were utilized only for the performance of high-class ceremonies; such was the *ahurewa*. Others, as the *rua iti*, seem to have been resorted to only for such evil purposes as the destruction of life. There appears also to have been an intermediary type of place at which ordinary ceremonial was performed, such as that pertaining to various industries, and to war, which itself may be said to have been a native industry. The *ahurewa* was certainly a very important place, apparently the most important of all *tūāhu*. It was often a real place, but the term seems to have been also applied to certain conditions, and even to persons, such as a high-grade *tohunga*, or priest.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRMI p.272

The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand's South Island, describes the *tūāhu* from his understanding:

The *tūāhu* is a place of ritual where only initiated *tohunga* (expert, adept) could go to perform their sacred rites, and few knew of its existence.

Māori consider the *tūāhu* a fearful place with *tapu* enough to kill a person should they trespass upon the site, even accidentally. At the *tūāhu* site there is also the *ahu* or altar. The *ahu* is also called the *ahurewa*. Its structure is simple yet strong, made from a pile of stones placed together. The *tūāhu* has stones for the altar and around the site, because to the Māori mind stone is the strongest thing. While the earth may wash away and turn to dust, these stones endure and remain with time, like the knowledge of the *tohunga*.

The *tūāhu* is not the altar itself, but the name embraces the whole temple containing the *tapu* area. The place is reserved for *tohunga* (adepts, experts). Nearby is also a spring for ritual purifications, called the 'waters of *Rongo*'. This spring is found ahead of the altar, so that on approaching the area people could first cleanse themselves before entering the *tapu* area, and the same was done when leaving the site. The spring is dedicated to *Rongo*, the god of peace, so that peace and kind thoughts were held in esteem here in preparation for prayers and holy operations.

Offerings were not taken here because food was not allowed near the *tūāhu*. They were made elsewhere to the godsticks (*whakapakoko*) on cliff peaks where the *atua* might have visited. The *tūāhu* was strictly a place of meditation, ceremony, dedication, and prayer. *Karakia* (chants, incantations) were also said here and the whole place was dedicated to *Io* the Most Supreme. While the *tūāhu* was dedicated to *Io*, all the *atua* could receive prayer at the site, but *Io* came first at the *tūāhu*. The other *atua* always came after *Io* and at the shrine no idol or image was erected to *Io* because *Io* is beyond form or thought. Instead, there were carvings kept at the *tūāhu* for (lesser gods such as) *Tāne*, *Rehua*, *Uenuku* and *Rongo*, who were found worthy before *Io*.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK p.94

See also: **ahurewa**, **pātai-atua**.

tulsī (H/Pu), **tulasī** (S) *Lit.* holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*, previously *Ocimum sanctum*); a Southeast Asian perennial plant cultivated for medicinal and religious purposes; shown in scientific studies to contain a wide range of substances beneficial to health; associated with *Vishnu*, thus regarded as sacred, and revered by traditional Hindus; distinct from the culinary herb known as sweet basil (*Ocimum basilicum*).

Many Hindus grow *tulsī* in their home courtyards, sometimes in a raised brick enclosure or mound of earth known as a *vrindāvan*. It is worshipped with the waving of lamps and circumambulation (*ārtī*). In traditional Hindu families, a few drops of water in which *tulsī* leaves have been dipped were once given to dying people as a sacred rite. It was believed that the departing soul would thereby be assured a place in heaven. The dried *tulsī* berries are also used as rosary beads. The origins of this veneration are uncertain, but have perhaps developed from the use of *tulsī* in traditional herbal medicine.

Mystics see the divine presence in everything, making no distinction between one form and another. As Ramakrishna describes his early ascent to the Divine:

Leaving the phenomenal world, my mind would ascend to the Absolute. I found no distinction between the ordinary *sajina* plant and the sacred *tulsī*. I no longer liked seeing the forms of God. I said to them, “You, too, cause a feeling of separation” – so I let the forms go. I removed all the paintings and images of the deities that were in my room. I began to meditate on the indivisible *sat-chit-ānanda*, the primal *Purusha*. I had the attitude of a handmaiden – the maid of *Purusha*.

Ramakrishna, Kathāmṛta 3:14.1, SRK3

See also: **pippala**.

turuma (Mo) *Lit.* latrine; usually situated outside the housing area of a *pā* (fortified village), often near the edge of a cliff or in some deserted place; consisted of two vertical poles for support and a horizontal beam known as the *paepae*, which played a significant part in some rituals and magical ceremonies. For reasons of hygiene and sanitation, the *turuma* was considered *tapu* (sacred, restricted). Cleanliness in matters of sanitation was regarded as important, as early voyagers have attested.¹

It is an unusual fact that the *turuma* or latrine played an important role in Māori priestly culture and was even utilized as a place at which to perform rites on behalf of warriors going to war, for warding off evil spirits and illness, and for other ceremonies, thus sometimes serving the purpose of a *tūāhu* (sacred site). On the closing of a *whare wānanga* (esoteric school of learning), students taught by the priests were required to undergo the *ngau paepae* or ‘bite the beam’ ritual to remove from them the state of *tapu* that had been induced by their period of learning in the college. The participants would bite the horizontal beam or *paepae* of the *turuma* associated with the school, while *karakia* (chants, formulae) were repeated.²

The *kouka* (space) behind the horizontal beam (*paepae*) represented death, while the space in front represented life. It is possible that the Māori attitude towards the *turuma* originated in his belief in the inherent powers of the generative organs and that the *turuma* acts as a ‘parent’ to man – in the sense of a protective power; it preserves the *hau-ora*, virility and welfare of man, “The *paepae* is the *tangata matua* (human parent); it is the *hau-ora* (health) of man; it is the destroyer of man; it is the saviour of man.”³

1. See Raymond Firth, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, PEZM p.79.
2. See Elsdon Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, MRM1 pp.276–77; *Maori School of Learning*, MSLB p.20.
3. Elsdon Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, MRM1 p.355.

tútàn zhāi (C) *Lit.* mud-and-soot (*tú-tàn*) retreat (*zhāi*); mud-and-soot abstinence; a ritual of the *Tiānshī* school of Daoism performed from at least the third century CE until the seventh century. The mud-and-soot retreat was performed to eliminate impurities by repenting past sins. The ritual involved smearing mud and/or soot on the face, disheveling the hair and confessing one’s sins while lying on the floor. It was further believed that if the ritual were performed by a Daoist priest (*dàoshi*) on behalf of the suppliant, the benefits would extend to the spirits of the suppliant’s deceased parents and ancestors, who would be freed from the netherworld. If a priest performed the ritual, he would either bind his hands or bind himself to the altar to represent the sufferings of the netherworld. The likelihood of

success was enhanced if the priest performed the ritual in ice and snow during the winter.

See also: **chàn, zhāi**.

‘umrah (A/P) *Lit.* to visit; the lesser or minor pilgrimage, performed by Muslim pilgrims on entering Mecca; also called *ḥajj al-aṣghar* (lesser pilgrimage); contrasted with the greater pilgrimage (*ḥajj*); regarded as meritorious, though optional, for Muslim residents of Mecca; dates from the time of Muḥammad, but is an amalgamation of several pre-Islamic rituals that were reinterpreted in Muslim terms and augmented by Muslim prayers; can be performed (like *ḥajj*) on behalf of someone else by mentally expressing the intention to do so before going through the various rites in the usual way. The rites of ‘umrah take little more than an hour and are a subset of those of *ḥajj*, which takes several days. The ‘umrah can be performed on its own at any time of the year, except during the season of *ḥajj*.

As with a *ḥajj*, while still outside Mecca, the pilgrim enters a state of ritual purity (*iḥrām*) and makes a formal declaration of intent to perform the ‘umrah. He then enters the city, makes seven circuits (*ṭawāf*) of the sacred shrine of the *Ka’bah*. He may also touch the Black Stone (*Ḥajar al-Aswad*), offer two rounds of prayer (*raka’āt*) at the sacred stone of *Maqām Ibrāhīm*, drink holy water from the nearby spring of *Zamzam*, and again touch the Black Stone, though this part of the rite is optional. He must then run (usually walk) seven times between the two low hills of Ṣafā and Marwah, a ritual known as the *sa’y* (effort). The ‘umrah is completed with a further round (*rak’ah*) of prayer and the ritual shaving of his head.

The *Qur’ān* advocates both *ḥajj* and ‘umrah:

And complete the *ḥajj* or ‘umrah in the service of *Allāh*.

Qur’ān 2:196; cf. AYA

Behold! Ṣafā and Marwah are among the symbols of *Allāh*. So if those who visit the House (*i.e.* the *Ka’bah*) in the season or at other times (*i.e.* ‘umrah) should compass them round, it is no sin in them.

Qur’ān 2:158; cf. AYA

See also: **ḥajj, Ka’bah, ṭawāf**.

upanayana (S) *Lit.* leading near to; introduction; related to the verb *upanī* (to lead, to bring near, to guide); the traditional Indian thread ceremony in which a *guru* initiates a boy into one of the three twice-born (S. *dvija*, H. *dojanmā*) castes;

a ceremony in which a boy is invested with the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*), as prescribed in the *Dharma Sūtra* and explained in the *Gṛihya Sūtra*, thereby giving him a second birth (hence the epithet ‘twice-born’) that qualifies him to become a student of the *Vedas*.

Ancient Hindu texts say that *upanayana* should take place in the seventh or eighth year for a *brāhmaṇ*, in the eleventh for a *kshatriya*, and in the twelfth for a *vaishya*, although the timing can be delayed. Other texts advise that the ages should be seven, thirteen and seventeen, respectively. The ages reflect the fact that the *brāhmaṇ*s were the scholarly caste, and hence needed to start their education at an earlier age. The *kshatriyas* were the warrior caste, and the *vaishya* were farmers and traders. In modern practice, a person’s profession is not dependent on the class or caste in which he is born. A *brāhmaṇ* may be a trader, a *vaishya* a teacher; but it is not common for a *vaishya* or *kshatriya* to be a priest.

Traditionally, the ceremony marked the acceptance of a boy or adolescent by his *guru*, and was the time when his formal education would begin. The initiation entitled him to life as a student, entering the first of the four phases of life – of becoming a *brahmachāri* (celibate) until his marriage, according to the rules of society laid down in the *Manu Smṛiti*. At that time, he would receive the sacred *gāyatrī updes*h (initiation), and the *Gāyatrī Mantra* was also given to him, following which he was expected to perform *sandhyā* twice daily (*brāhmaṇ* prayers at dawn and dusk). He was also made aware that the purpose of life is realization of *Brahman*, the ultimate Reality. After receiving this initiation, the individual is said to be twice-born. The custom is very ancient, dating back to Aryan times.

The sacred thread itself and the ceremony are known by various names in different languages and different parts of India. The terms used include *yajñopavīta* (thread sacrifice) and *upanayana* in Sanskrit; *janeu* (sacred thread) in Hindi and *janeo* or *janeū* in Punjabi; *muñja* and *muñja-bandhana* (tying of *muñja*, a type of tall reed or sedge – *Saccharum munja* – used to make the thread) in Marathi; *janai* and *bratabandha* (to be bound by a vow) in Nepali; *lagun* (sacred thread) and *lagundeoni* (sacred-thread ceremony) in Assamese; *yonya* (from *yajñopavīta*) and *mekhal* (girdle) in Kashmiri; *janoi* and *yagñopavīt* in Gujarati; and so on.

In previous times, the sacred thread was worn only by male members of the *brāhmaṇ*, *kshatriya* and *vaishya* castes after they had undergone the thread ceremony. In modern times, it is also worn by members of other castes; some groups, such as the *Ārya Samāj* perform the ceremony for girls. The thread is passed over the left shoulder and hangs down diagonally across the body under the right arm, to the right hip.

The thread itself is circular, tied with a single knot, usually consisting of three cotton strands, to which various symbolic meanings have been given. Its length is traditionally measured as ninety-six times the breadth of a man’s

four fingers, which is believed to be equal to his height. The four fingers are said to symbolize the four states of consciousness known to human beings: waking, dreaming, dreamless sleep, and superconsciousness. Some say that the three strands symbolize the three debts that must never be forgotten: to one's teachers (*gurus*); to one's parents and ancestors who have made one's existence possible; and to the sages and scholars of both spiritual and secular knowledge, which enrich one's life. In some instances, the third debt is said to be the debt to God. Sometimes, the three threads become six at the time of marriage, when the wearer also takes on the debts of his wife. Variations exist in other communities. One thread may be added, for instance, for each child that is born, to remind the man of his family responsibilities.

Others maintain that the three threads represent purity in thought, word and deed, or the three gods, *Gāyatrī*, *Sarasvatī* and *Savitṛī*, being the goddesses of mind, word, and deed. It is also said that the three threads signify the three *guṇas* or three primary attributes of nature: *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. The combination of these three threads represents the balanced pursuit of righteousness (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*) and happiness (*kāma*), by cultivating which it is hoped that liberation (*moksha*) from birth and death will be achieved. The combination of these three also signifies that everything emerges from *Brahman* and will return again to It. The single knot is sometimes said to symbolize *Brahman* itself, wherein all things are one.

According to ancient Hindu texts, the normal way of wearing the sacred thread is the style said to have been adopted by the gods.¹ Worn over the right shoulder and under the left arm is the style of spirits, and is used by men performing the death rites of an elder.² Around the neck and hanging down over the chest is the form adopted while attending to the call of nature and during sexual intercourse.³ After *upanayana*, the sacred thread is supposed to be worn for the remainder of one's life, replaced annually.

In Buddhism, whose early period was characterized by the rejection of external rituals, the three threads are associated with taking refuge in the 'triple gem (S. *triratna*)' of the Buddha, the *Dharma* (teachings, path), and the *sangha* (community of followers).

In Jainism, where the tradition of *upanayana* also prevails, the three threads are said to signify the three gems of knowledge, faith, conduct of life, or the succession of the *Tīrthankaras* (Jain saints) during the past, present and future epochs of the world.

A symbolic interpretation of the sacred thread is also found in the *Upanishads*. Quoting the *mantra* traditionally repeated whenever a *brāhmaṇ* puts on the sacred thread, the *Brahma Upanishad* says that *Brahman* lies within the spiritual heart, and the sacred thread symbolizes *Brahman* Itself. The writer also equates the symbolism of the sacred thread (*sūtra*, *yajñopavīta*) with the tuft of hair (*shikhā*) upon the head, another external sign of *brāhmaṇs*:

The one highest *Brahman* shines there. . . . It exists within the heart, that is, in the consciousness. “Put on the sacrificial thread (*yajñopavīta*), the supreme, the holy, which came into existence with *Prajāpati* himself (the first created being, lord of all created beings), which embodies longevity, eminence, and purity; may it give you strength and ardour (*tejas*, brilliance, fire, energy)!”

A wise one should discard the external thread (*sūtra*), together with the sacred tuft of hair upon the head (*shikhā*); the holy thread (*sūtra*) that he should wear is the supreme and all-pervading *Brahman*. . . . On that *sūtra* everything is strung, like beads upon a thread. The *yogī*, well-versed in *yoga* and with a clear perception of the Truth should wear this thread (*sūtra*).

Established in the highest state of *yoga*, the wise man should discard the external thread (*sūtra*). He who wears the thread (*sūtra*) as *Brahman* is self-realized. By wearing this thread (*sūtra*), he never becomes impure; those who have this thread (*sūtra*) within themselves, whose sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) is spiritual knowledge (*jñāna*) – only they truly wear the sacrificial thread (*yajñopavīta*). Those whose tuft of hair (*shikhā*) is *jñāna*, who are firmly grounded in knowledge (*jñāna*) of *Brahman* and whose sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) is *jñāna*, consider *jñāna* alone to be supreme.

Jñāna is holy and excellent. He whose tuft of hair (*shikhā*) is *jñāna* is as indistinguishable from it as a flame from fire. He alone, the wise one, is a true *shikhī* (one with a *shikhā*); others are merely growers of hair. Those belonging to three castes who have the right to perform the Vedic ceremonies – they only wear this thread as a symbol of their ceremonies.

Those who truly understand the *Vedas* say that he alone is a true *brāhmaṇ* who wears the hair-tuft (*shikhā*) – and likewise the sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) – of knowledge (*jñāna*).⁴

Brahma Upanishad 3, 5–14; cf. *MUM* pp.54–61, *TMU* pp.82–83

Brāhmaṇs and high-caste Hindus have traditionally made much of this status symbol. Mystics, however, have said that the real adornments of a spiritual person are spiritual virtues. Kabīr, who taught in the Hindu stronghold of Vārāṇasī, is unflattering of the *brāhmaṇs*:

They wear loincloths, three and a half yards long,
and triple-wound sacred threads.
They have rosaries around their necks,
and they carry glittering jugs in their hands.
They are not called saints of the Lord –
they are thugs (*thag*, cheats or swindlers) of Vārāṇasī.

Kabīr, Ādi Granth 476, AGK

And the fifteenth-century Guru Nānak suggests:

Make compassion (*daiā*) the cotton, contentment (*santokh*) the thread,
modesty (*sūt*) the knot, and truth (*sat*) the twist.
This is the sacred thread (*janeū*) of the soul:
if you have it, then go ahead and put it on me.
It does not break, it cannot be soiled by filth,
it cannot be burnt, or lost.
Blessed are those mortal beings, O Nānak,
who wear such a thread around their necks.

Guru Nānak, *Ādi Granth* 471, AGK

According to the legend, the young Nānak is said to have spoken these words at the time of his own thread ceremony.

See also: **dvija** (7.4), **zunnār**.

1. E.g. *Kātyāyana-shrauta Sūtras*.
2. E.g. *Kātyāyana-shrauta Sūtras*; *Manu Smṛiti*.
3. E.g. *Shāḍviṃsha Brāhmaṇa*; *Lātyāyana-shrauta Sūtras*.
4. Cf. *Nārada-parivṛājaka Upanishad* 3:79–88.

upāsana, upāsanā (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* seated (*āsana*) near to (*up*); action by which one is brought near to God; hence, worship, prayer, devotion, adoration, homage, meditation; specifically, ritualistic worship with meditation, meditative worship, worshipful meditation; a term combining the meanings of both meditation and worship; veneration and worship of God in one of His numerous forms or manifestations; meditation on some aspect of creation (the sun, fire, water, the six directions, mind, food, bliss, *etc.*) as a symbol of *Brahman*; contemplation or meditation on *Brahman* with the aid of symbols; a term related to *upāsya* (to worship, to meditate) and *upanishad* (a sitting down near).

Unlike *pūjā*, which is essentially external worship according to various rites, *upāsana* requires a degree of inward concentration. According to the eleventh-century philosopher and theologian Rāmānuja, *upāsana* plays a vital role in the process by which love and devotion for God are strengthened.

Upāsana is a practice for approaching or getting close to a deity or saint of the past in which a mental picture of the deity or saint is brought before the mind's eye and worshipped. The practice requires a degree of inner mental concentration, since the object of the *upāsana* may be bathed, dressed, offered flowers, and so on – all in meditative imagination. The mind must therefore be held steady upon the imagined scene. The purpose of the *upāsana* may be the

fulfilment of some particular need or desire. When the deity is pleased with the worship, he or she is believed to fulfil the wishes of the devotee, either by making a personal appearance or by knowing the content of the devotee's mind.

Sometimes, the attempt is made to contemplate and worship the 'unseen and infinite Lord' (*nirguṇa upāsana*), but concentration is hard to achieve by this method, since it is impossible for a finite and corporeal human being to worship a mental conception of the 'infinite Lord'.

According to the *Vedāntasāra*:

Mental activities relating to *saguṇa Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes) ... are *upāsanas*.

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 12; cf. VSY p.6

Saguṇa Brahman (*Brahman* with attributes) refers to *Brahman* as manifested in the creation. *Saguṇa* is used to contrast mentally active worship (*upāsana*), in which the worshipper and *Brahman* remain separate, with complete absorption in the *nirguṇa Brahman* (*Brahman* without attributes), in which all distinction between the worshipper and the worshipped disappear. *Saguṇa upāsana* is generally prescribed before *nirguṇa upāsana* because the former is required to train the mind in the practice of concentration on something, before the focus is shifted to concentration on the abstract.

A number of the *Upanishads*, particularly the *Chhāndogya* and *Bṛihad-āraṇyaka*, portray *upāsana* as a bridge between the purely external rites invoking various deities and so on, and the heights of contemplation upon *Brahman*, when the mind becomes absolutely still. External rites, when accompanied by appropriate *upāsana* or meditation, become invested with a deeper meaning and can result in spiritual benefit. Hence, Shankara writes:

Upāsana means approaching the form of the deity or the like – as it is presented by the eulogistic portion of the *Vedas* ... – and concentrating on it, excluding all worldly thoughts, till one is completely identified with it.

Shankara, on Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 4:1.2, in U3 p.104

Swami Nikhilananda further elucidates:

According to Vidyāraṇya, the author of *Pañchadashī*, *upāsana* consists in uninterrupted meditation by the mind on an object of worship learnt from a teacher, whose words the aspirant accepts with unquestioning faith. This inclination of the mind must not be disturbed by any thought foreign to what has been taught by the teacher. If the mind is directed in an unbroken trend to the object of *upāsana*, it acquires such a noble trait that it continues to think of that ideal even in dreams. *Upāsana* presupposes a distinction between the worshipper and the object of worship.

Furthermore, *upāsana* is based upon faith; reasoning has nothing to do with it. Lastly, the method of *upāsana* is to be known from a teacher or the scriptures, and should not be created by one's own imagination.

Shankarāchārya, in his introduction to the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, has said, with reference to *upāsana*, that its purpose is “to produce a support for the mind approved by the teachings of the scriptures, and make uniform states of the mind flow toward it in such a way that they will not be interrupted by any idea foreign to them”. This support, or the object of meditation, can be *saguṇa Brahman* or any other deity approved by the scriptures.

Swami Nikhilananda, Introduction to Chhāndogya Upanishad, U4 p.89

But ultimately, the aspiration of the *Upanishads* is to rise above all multiplicity and attain union with *Brahman*. *Upāsana* will not lead to that realization, but it is a step on the way:

Upāsana cannot directly produce the knowledge of *Brahman* or liberation; but it purifies the heart. The discipline of *upāsana* is easier to pursue than that of knowledge (*jñāna*). The discipline of knowledge, which requires discrimination between the Real and the unreal, and renunciation of the unreal, is extremely difficult; it demands a keen intellect and a stern will. Only a few can practise it; besides one does not even become qualified for it until one's heart has become pure and unselfish through *upāsana*. *Upāsana*, though inferior to the discipline of knowledge, should not be looked down upon.

Swami Nikhilananda, Introduction to Chhāndogya Upanishad, U4 p.90

At the outset, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* counsels:

Aum – one should meditate (*upāsita*) upon this syllable as the *Udgītha*; for people sing this hymn, which begins with *Aum*.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.1, 1:4.1

The *Udgītha* is a hymn from the *Sāma Veda*. Because people are accustomed to singing the hymn, the *Upanishad* is suggesting that ritualistic singing be accompanied by meditation upon it and its meaning, for, it says:

That *Udgītha* (*Aum*) is the quintessence of all essences, the supreme, the highest.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.3

At the very beginning, the well-known Vedic hymn is given a mystical meaning, and is designated as a symbol of *Aum*, itself a symbol of the divine Power, the highest Essence, by which the creation comes into being. As the

Upanishad unfolds, it goes on to counsel *upāsana* on a variety of things that feature in Vedic ritual, each being understood or interpreted as symbols of *Brahman*. They are to be meditated upon as if they were *Brahman*, because *Brahman* is present everywhere and in everything. It recommends *upāsana* on the sun (because it “dispels fear and darkness” like *Aum*), on the breath (because it is warm, like the sun), and on the *vyāna* (because it is the *prāṇa*, the ‘breath’ or subtle life energy by which one speaks) – and all three as though they were the *Udgītha* (primal Sound, *Aum*) itself. In each instance, the *Upanishad* recommends that one should meditate (*upāsita*) on the sun as the *Udgītha* or on the subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) as the *Udgītha*, and so on.¹ It also advises meditation on the individual syllables comprising the word ‘*udgītha*’, which are themselves given symbolic meanings.²

Later on, it adds that by such means the practitioner of *upāsana* will hear the “pleasant sounds” of *Aum*, the creative power:

He who ... meditates (*upāsita*) on the sun as *Brahman* – pleasant sounds will quickly come to him and fill him with joy; truly, they will fill him with joy.

Chhândogya Upanishad 3:19.4, U4 p.219

Written by the unknown author for the people of his own time, the *Upanishad* is a remarkable weaving of the external with the internal, leading the performers of Vedic ritual towards the highest *upāsana*:

The Light that shines higher than this heaven – beyond all, beyond everything, in the highest worlds beyond which there are none higher – is the same light that is present within every person.

It can be seen, just like the perception of bodily warmth by touch. And it can be heard when, on closing the ears, one hears a kind of sound, roaring like that of blazing fire. One should meditate (*upāsita*) on this – whatever is seen and heard. He who knows (experiences) this becomes beautiful to behold, and is someone worth hearing.

Chhândogya Upanishad 3:13.7–8

A similar approach is adopted by the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* and other *Upanishads*. The writers of these texts are trying to lead the practitioners of Vedic rituals from the external to the internal, and ultimately to the realization of *Brahman*. Therefore, they repeat that while *Brahman* is certainly manifested in everything in creation and all the things that figure in the Vedic rituals, ultimately:

One should meditate upon the Self (*Ātman*) alone as dear. He who meditates (*upāsita*) upon the Self alone as dear, then (unlike other things) what he holds dear will not perish.

Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad 1:4.8

It has been called ‘Beloved (*Tadvana*)’; it should be meditated (*upāsita*) upon as the Beloved. All beings yearn for one to whom this is known.

Kena Upanishad 4:6

One should meditate (*upāsita*) with the syllable *Aum* upon that boundless light.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:37

He is the Source,
the Cause that brings union (between spirit and matter).
He is indivisible, beyond the three aspects of time –
Meditate (*upāsya*) upon that adorable God,
who is possessed of all forms,
who is the origin of all being,
who dwells in the heart (*chit*).

Shvetāshvatarā Upanishad 6:5

In the midst of life’s uncertainty, it is the subtle imperishable existence that must be known. So, relinquishing the maze of scriptures, meditate (*upāsya*) upon the Real (*Satya*).

Paingala Upanishad 4:17

Meditate (*upāsita*) on this Self (*Ātman*), which is ageless, deathless, fearless, sorrowless, and endless.

Subāla Upanishad 5:1

In the city (of the body), there is a small, pure lotus, wherein dwells the Supreme. Further into the interior of this small space, there is the sorrowless heaven (*gagan*). Meditate (*upāsita*) constantly upon this.

Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad 12:16

Some later Indian mystics have also used the term in a less specific manner. According to Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, the highest form of *upāsana* is meditation on the divine Word (*Shabd*):

Without meditation (*upāsana*)
the attention (*chit*) is not steady.
Without the Word,
there is no other worship (*upās*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 24:1.76, SBP p.204

See also: **upāsaka** (►4).

1. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1.3.1–3.
2. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1:3.6.

upavās(a) (S/Pa/H), **bsnyen gnas** (T) *Lit.* fasting, a fast; abstinence; voluntary abstinence from or restriction of the intake of food and water; also, abstinence from sensual gratification, including perfumes, ornaments, music, dancing, and so on; a practice followed with religious motivation in Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions.

Upavāsa can be understood as a physical discipline concerned with the restriction of food in order to mortify the body, to control desire, and to diminish the attraction of the mind and spirit for the body. It can also refer to inner ‘fasting’ from all that keeps the soul away from its inherently divine nature.

Upavāsa is sometimes said to be derived from *upa* (near) and *vāsa* (dwelling, abode), and some Jain commentators have taken ‘abode’ to imply the soul. Taken in this way, *upavāsa* means staying close to one’s real self or soul, which is the essential purpose of all spiritual practice. In this context, *upavāsa* is said to be superior to *anashana* (‘not eating’, fasting), which is the first of the six external austerities incumbent upon a Jain mendicant. In this sense, *upavāsa* means abstaining from all things that are external to one’s own true being, not just abstinence from food and drink. The same association is made in the Hindu *Varāha Upanishad*, which says:

Upavāsa signifies the nearness of the individual soul or self (*jīva*) to the supreme Soul (*Paramātman*), not emaciation of the body. What is gained by the mere emaciation of the body?

Varāha Upanishad 2:39; cf. *TMU* pp.170–71, *YU* pp.407–8

The ninth-century Indian philosopher Shankara also writes:

So what if one practised starvation (*upavāsa*), punishing the body?
 So what if one has got a son through one’s own sweet wife?
 So what if one has mastered the technique of *prāṇāyāma* –
 if one is not aware of the knowledge of one’s own self?

Shankara, Anāthma Vigarhaṇa Prakaraṇam 7; cf. *AVPS*

The Indian *sant* Tulsīdās (1532–1623) says much the same:

Tell me, what difficulty is there in treading the path of devotion (*bhagati*): it requires neither *yoga* (*jog*), nor sacrifices, nor *jap* (muttering of prayers), nor penance (*tap*), nor fasting (*upavās*). A guileless disposition, a mind free from perversity, and absolute contentment with whatever comes to him – this is all that is needed.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 7:45.1; cf. *RCML* p.1001

In Hindu and yogic traditions, *upavāsa* is understood as a means of purifying the body and mind for the purposes of meditation, and is sometimes listed as one of the *niyamas* (observances, disciplines) of *yoga*, twenty-four of which are listed in the *Uddhava Gītā* of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.¹ It is also a practice recommended in *Āyurveda*, traditional Indian medicine. On the other hand, the *Mahābhārata* observes that long fasts are harmful, instead recommending not eating between breakfast and the evening meal.² The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* specifically instructs that the practitioner of *prāṇāyāma* (control of the breath and subtle life energy) “should avoid early morning baths, fasting (*upavāsa*), and anything that causes pain to the body”.³ The *Shiva Saṃhitā* also lists both *upavāsa*, undereating and overeating as being among twenty-three “obstacles” to successful spiritual life and to *yoga* in particular. These include such things as strong-tasting foods, theft and untruthfulness, cruelty to animals, the companionship of women, and so on.⁴

In *Theravāda* Buddhism, *upavāsa* refers to the abstinence practised by the laity during the fortnightly, twenty-four hour *uposatha* or retreat, during which the monastic rules of conduct laid down in the *pātimokkha* are recited. This implies adherence to the eight precepts (*aṭṭha-sīla*) that are followed during *uposatha*, viz. not to kill, to steal, to engage in sexual activity, to tell an untruth, to use intoxicants, to eat after noon, to adorn the body, or to sleep on an elevated bed.

In Jainism, *upavāsa* is one of the *shikshā-vratas* (vows of spiritual discipline) that can be taken by Jain laypeople. Fasting, of which many forms are practised, is regarded as an austerity (*tapas*), performed in order to acquire religious merit (*puṇya*) and in the belief that it lightens the soul’s burden of *karma*, which stands in the way of liberation (*moksha*). For a laywoman, fasting is seen as a way of increasing her social standing and that of her family. It is also regarded as a way of exhibiting her piety and purity, something that in a young unmarried woman may prove attractive to a potential husband. In common with some Hindu fasts, the fasting of a wife is also believed to ensure the health of her husband and family. A Jain fast should not be with the intention of fulfilling a particular desire or to meet the obligations of a vow to a deity. Fasting to death, a vow that may be taken in advance by a layperson or mendicant who resolves to fast until death when the end of life draws near, is called *sallekhanā*. Fasting is also known as *anashana* (‘not eating’), though the term is generally used in the context of the *anashana-vrata*, one of the six external austerities (*bāhya-tapas*) practised to various degrees by both Jain laity and mendicants.

Fasting for a limited period may be undertaken in the home, but for longer fasts, people generally collect together in mendicant halls (*upāshraya*). The end of such fasts are times of public celebration, accompanied by singing, dancing and feasting, with photographs in the local newspapers and parades near the temple. Religious merit can be acquired by providing food to those who are ending a fast, and people may come for the *darshana* (sight) of the

fasters. It is also a time when gifts (*dāna*) are given to the temple, to the mendicant community, and to the fasters.⁵

A Jain *upavāsa* involves taking no food and water, or drinking only boiled water. The duration can vary in extent from one day or longer. Some observe a month-long *upavāsa*, during which time they consume only water. Some undertake the *varshī-tapas*, in which they fast for a year on alternate days. Some *Shvetāmbaras* observe an eight-day *upavāsa* during the *Paryushaṇa* festival, and likewise *Digambaras* during the ten-day *Dasha-Lakṣhaṇa-Parvan*. Many more keep a one-day *upavāsa* on the last day of these festivals. During some fasts, such as the *upadhāna-tapas* – a time of communal fasting, meditation, and devotion – laypeople observe a number of the more stringent mendicant vows. Less stringent variants include *chauvihar upavāsa* (no food or water between sunset and sunrise), *tivihar upavāsa* (drinking only boiled water between sunset and sunrise), and *duvihar upavāsa* (taking only water and medicine between sunset and sunrise).

Poshadhopavāsa-vrata (vow of fasting and abstinence) is one of the four *shikshā-vratas* (vows of spiritual discipline) that can be taken by laypeople. The practitioner withdraws from all external activity and abstains from all food and water for a period of between twelve to forty-eight hours, devoting their time to meditation (*dhyāna*), the study of the scriptures (*svādhyāya*), listening to spiritual discourses, and so on. The vow may be observed once a week, on the four holy days in the lunar month (eighth and fourteenth days of its waxing and waning), or during certain Jain festivals, either for one day, or throughout the entire period of the festival.

Some Jain *āchāryas* of the past, such as Pūjyapāda and Chāmuṇḍarāya, understood the relinquishing of all sensory pleasures to be encompassed by this vow, including that of listening to pleasing sounds.⁶ It is also recommended that a secluded place be sought for the duration of the *upavāsa*. Jain *āchāryas* have mentioned temples, a dedicated fasting hall (*poshadha-sālā*), in the company of a *sādhu*, one's home (perhaps in a dedicated room), a hill-top, a forest glade, and so on. The primary purpose of a *poshadhopavāsa* is to help in attaining a state of serenity or equanimity (*sāmāyika*), the quest for which is the purpose of the *sāmāyika-vrata* (vow of equanimity), another of the four *shikshā-vratas*.⁷

See also: **ekādashī**.

1. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* 11:14.34.
2. *Mahābhārata* 12, *Shāntiparva* 214:4, DCS.
3. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 5:31; cf. GSV p.41.
4. *Shiva Saṃhitā* 3:32–33.
5. See mostly “fasting,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.
6. Pūjyapāda, *Sarvārthasiddhi*, on *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:21; Chāmuṇḍarāya, *Chāritrasāra*, CSCM p.12.
7. See R. Williams, *Jaina Yoga*, JYMS p.144.

uposhadha, **poshadha**, **poshatha** (S), **uposatha** (Pa), **gso sbyong** (T), **bùsà** (C), **fusatsu shiki** (J), **p'osal** (Korean), **wan fra** (Thai), **poya** (Sinhala) *Lit.* to remain in a state of fasting; a fast day; a Buddhist day of fasting and spiritual/religious observance by monks, nuns and the laity, especially in *Theravāda* Buddhism; a day for renewing dedication to the practice of the Buddha's teachings (*Dhamma*) by additional meditation, listening to *Dhamma* talks, chanting, reading inspirational Buddhist texts, service to others, charitable giving, and so on; based on Vedic ceremony known as *upavasatha*, which was a sacrifice to the deity *Soma*, held on new and full-moon days.

Uposatha is a time for fully ordained monks and nuns to confess their faults (Pa. *āpattidesanā*), misdemeanours and infringements of the monastic rules (either to a fellow monastic or before the assembly), to renew their commitment to the three refuges and five precepts, and – in the *Theravāda* tradition – to the monastic rules (Pa. *pātimokkha*) contained in the *Vinaya Piṭaka*. For novices and lay practitioners, it is an opportunity to visit their local temple or monastery for meditation, worship, fasting, and to renew their commitment to observing the five precepts. The five precepts are: not to take the life of any living being; not to steal or take what is not given; to abstain from sexual misconduct; to abstain from false or wrong speech; and to abstain from intoxicants. For the laity, the five precepts are often augmented to eight, the additional three being: not to eat after midday (sometimes said to be not to eat at night); not to wear ornaments or otherwise adorn the body; and not to sit or sleep on a raised bed. These eight precepts are a part of a monastic's daily life, and it gives the layperson the opportunity to live a life similar to that of a monk or a nun for a day. Laypeople may also pass the night at the monastery.

A minimum of four monks is required for the *uposatha* ceremony to be performed. This is known as the *sangha-uposatha*. *Sangha*, here, refers specifically to the community of monks and nuns. The *pātimokkha* is recited, but only if four or more are assembled. The recitation may take between thirty to sixty minutes depending upon the speed of the chanter. The *Pātimokkha* lists twenty-one kinds of unsuitable persons (*vajjanīya-puggala*) who are not permitted to attend a monk's *uposatha* ceremony. They are: nuns; women who are training to become nuns; male and female novices; those who have left the order; those who have joined other religions; bogus monks who wear the robes of a monk without having been ordained; those who have committed a serious offence (*pārājika*); those who have seduced a nun; those who will not acknowledge one of three kinds of misdemeanour; schismatics; eunuchs; hermaphrodites (probably homosexuals, ambiguous gender, *etc.*); laypeople; non-humans (animals *etc.*); those who have wounded a *buddha*; and those who have murdered an *arahanta* or their mother or father. In modern practice, some monasteries do permit the attendance of novices and laypeople. Monks and nuns hold separate *uposathas*. Although *uposatha* remains an important observance for lay Buddhists, it is rarely observed by lay followers of *Mahāyāna*.

traditions. *Upasatha* is observed in Japanese *Zen* monasteries, and in some East Asian countries, the *pātimokkha* is sometimes replaced by a recitation of the *bodhisattva* vows or the *Brahmajāla Sūtra* (*Brahmā Net Sūtra*).

Different traditions at different times have held up to six *uposathas* in a lunar month, usually towards the end of the month. Monastic communities in most *Theravāda* countries hold *uposatha* once a week, following the four phases of the moon – new, full, and the two quarters in between, but confession (*āpattidesanā*) and recitation of the *pātimokkha* is generally held fortnightly, on the new and full moon. These are sometimes called the major and minor *uposathas*. In Sri Lanka, a public holiday is also held on every full-moon, *uposatha* day, the name of the holiday being *poya* (Sinhala), which is a phonetic contraction of *uposatha*. The *uposatha* calendar, however, is drawn up using a complex formula that only approximates to the lunar cycle, and different *Theravāda* sects have their own calendars. In the *Mahāyāna* tradition, countries using the Chinese calendar observe *uposatha* days either six or ten times a month. Given the human propensity to drift away, inwardly, from a spiritual focus, the purpose of *uposatha* is as a support and a reminder to practise meditation, and to live according to the *Dhamma* and the *Vinaya*.

A number of full-moon *uposatha* days are celebrated as major Buddhist festivals. These include: *Vesākha Pūjā* (Pa) or Buddha Day, which celebrates the Buddha's birth and, in *Theravāda*, his enlightenment and final passage into *parinibbāna* at his death; *Āsālha Pūjā* (Pa) or *Dhamma* Day, which commemorates the day of the Buddha's first discourse; *Māgha Pūjā* or *Sangha* Day, which celebrates a gathering that spontaneously came together in gratitude to the Buddha at the end of the first rains retreat; *Pavāraṇā* Day, held at the end of the rains retreat; *Ullambana* or Ancestor Day, when homage is paid to parents and ancestors, in order to free them from rebirth; and *Ānāpānasati* Day, held on the last full-moon day of the rains retreat. The latter commemorates the time when, at the end of the three-month rains retreat at Sāvattthī, the Buddha was so pleased with the progress of the *sangha* that he encouraged them to extend their retreat by a further month by remaining at Sāvattthī. The story is told in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*:

Now on that occasion – the *uposatha* day of the fifteenth, the full-moon night of the *pavāraṇā* ceremony – the Blessed One was seated in the open air surrounded by the community (*sangha*) of monks (*bhikkhus*). Surveying the silent community of monks, he addressed them: “*Bhikkhus*, I am content with this observance. I am content at heart with this observance. So to arouse even greater, intense energy to attain the as-yet unattained, to reach the as-yet unreached, to realize the as-yet unrealized, I will remain here at Sāvattthī through to the full moon of the White Waterlily month, the fourth month of the rains.”

Majjhima Nikāya 118, *Ānāpānasati Sutta*, PTSM3 p.79; cf. MDBB p.941, MNTB

According to the *sutta*, at the end of the fourth month, the Buddha delivered a discourse on mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*).

In the Indian tradition, fasting (*upavāsa*) has been practised since at least Vedic times. It is also a common feature of Jain practice. It is clear from the Pali texts that *uposatha* existed prior to Buddhism, and was probably customary among the various *samaṇas* (contemplatives, ascetics) that are mentioned throughout the Pali *suttas*. As a day of inspiration and reinforcement of commitment and dedication to one's spiritual ideals, this is a common and valuable human practice. It is mirrored, for example, in the Jewish Sabbath, or in any day devoted to religious or spiritual activities. In a similar manner, the Buddha exhorted his followers, especially the monks, to observe the practice, though naturally with an emphasis on his particular teachings.

The *Uposatha Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* lays out the foundation of this spiritual re-grouping. He teaches that “*uposatha* is comprised of eight factors that the noble disciple observes, the observation of which brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit.” He then goes on to identify and expand on the eight precepts upon which a disciple should reflect during an *uposatha* day:

1. All *arahantas* (noble ones, enlightened ones) for as long as life lasts, have given up the intentional taking of life. The club and sword have been laid down; conscientious and kindly, they are compassionate towards all living beings.

All of you have given up the intentional taking of life, have put down all weapons, are conscientious and kindly, and compassionate toward all beings. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the *arahantas*, and the *uposatha* will have been observed by you.

Anguttara Nikāya 8:41, *Uposatha Sutta*, PTS4 p.249; cf. ANNK, NDBB p.1176

And so the discourse proceeds through the eight precepts. Disciples who follow the precepts are like *arahantas* who

2. ... for as long as life lasts, have given up and abstain from what has not been given. They take only what is given, are intent only on what is given, and dwell honestly without thoughts of theft. ...
3. ... have given up and abstain from sexual activity, and observe celibacy. They abstain from sexual intercourse, which is the common person's practice. ...
4. ... have given up and abstain from false speech. They speak only the truth and adhere to the truth. They are trustworthy and reliable, not deceivers of the world. ...

5. ... have given up and abstain from the taking of liquor, wine and intoxicants, which is the basis of heedlessness....
6. ... eat at one time only, abstaining from eating at night and from eating food at an inappropriate time....
7. ... have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments, and the watching of unsuitable entertainment. Nor do they beautify themselves with ornaments, flowers, or perfumes....
8. ... have given up and abstain from lying on high or luxurious beds. They are content with low beds or bedding made of grass....

Bhikkhus, the *uposatha* is comprised of these eight factors that the noble disciple observes, and it is of great and glorious fruit and benefit.

Anguttara Nikāya 8:41, *Upasatha Sutta*, PTSA4 pp.249–51;

cf. ANNK, NDBB pp.1176–78

In the *Mūluposatha Sutta* ('Discourse on the Roots of the *Upasatha*'),¹ the Buddha indicates that for *uposatha* to be spiritually beneficial it requires an attitude of dedication, which he goes on to illustrate. A cowherd, he says, when he returns home in the evening, reflects, "Today the cows grazed in such and such a place and drank water in such and such a place. Tomorrow the cows will graze in such and such a place and drink water in such and such a place." Just so, he continues, if a person observes the *uposatha* externally, but passes his time thinking of what he ate today and what he will eat tomorrow, "He passes the day with greed and longing in his mind. It is not of great fruit or great benefit, not of great glory or great radiance."

A noble disciple, on the other hand, observes *uposatha* for his own spiritual benefit. *Upasatha* "is the cleansing of the defiled mind through the proper technique", says the Buddha. That is, *uposatha* is a means of cleansing the mind of its worldly tendencies by exposure to good company and a good atmosphere, and is a reminder of the spiritual path. He then expands on several ways in which this can be brought about. Firstly, he speaks of five things to remember and consider, the first three being the three refuges:

1. The Tathāgata (the Buddha), who is "an *arahanta*, a perfectly awakened one, consummate in true knowledge and conduct, one who has gone the right way, knower of the universe, incomparable teacher of those who can be taught, teacher of gods and men, the Enlightened One, the Blessed One". This is a standard description of the Buddha, found throughout Buddhist literature.

2. The *Dhamma*, which “is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise”.
3. The *sangha*, which is the community “of the Blessed One’s disciples” who are “practising the good way, practising the upright way, practising the true way, practising the proper way. . . . This *sangha* of the Blessed One’s disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field for performing meritorious deeds.”
4. The disciple’s own virtuous behaviour, which is “untorn, unrent, unblotched, unmottled, conducive to liberation, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to concentration”.
5. The *devas* (gods), ruled by “the four great kings, . . . and *devas* still higher than these. I too have such faith, . . . such virtuous behaviour, such learning, such generosity and such wisdom as those deities possessed, because of which, when they passed away here, they were reborn there.”

Each of these recollections ends with the observation that “he is called a noble disciple who observes the *uposatha* of the Tathāgata/*Dhamma*, etc. and who lives with the Tathāgata/*Dhamma*, etc.” When a noble disciple recollects these, “his mind is calmed, joy arises, and the defilements of his mind are abandoned. This is how the defiled mind is cleansed through the proper technique.” Each of the five recollections is also compared to the cleansing of various mundane things by using the proper technique, viz. “a dirty head . . . by means of a cleansing paste, clay, and water”; “a dirty body . . . by means of a bathing brush, lime powder, and water”; “a dirty cloth . . . by means of heat, lye, cow dung, and water”; “a dirty mirror . . . by means of oil, ashes, and a roll of cloth”; and “impure gold . . . by means of a furnace, salt, red chalk, a blowpipe, and tongs”. Each of these, says the Buddha, together with the “appropriate effort” leads to the required cleansing of the particular item. Just so does the practice of these five recollections on *uposatha* day lead to cleansing of the “defiled mind”.

The Buddha then continues by detailing the eight precepts that are practised perfectly by the *arahantas*, by practising and dwelling upon which the *uposatha* will be appropriately observed. He then concludes, “Such is the *uposatha* of the noble disciples. When this *uposatha* of the noble disciples is observed in this way, it is of great fruit and great benefit, of great glory and great radiance.”

See also: **Buddhist festivals, pāpadeshanā, pravāraṇā, vrata.**

1. *Anguttara Nikāya* 3:70, *Mūluposatha Sutta*, *PTSA1* pp.205–12; cf. *ANTB*, *NDBB* pp.294–300; cf. *Anguttara Nikāya* 8:43; *Visākhūposatha Sutta*, *PTSA4* pp.255–58.

‘uzlah (A), **‘uzlat** (P) *Lit.* detachment; retirement, retreat (from worldly life), solitude, seclusion, isolation; can mean either withdrawal into physical isolation and the life of a hermit or recluse, or mental withdrawal from the attachments and distractions of material existence while still living among people. The purpose in both instances is to shed mental involvement with all created things in order to focus one-pointedly on the Divine.

Sufi schools are generally divided upon the question of living in the world or apart from it. Hujwīrī writes that Abū al-Ḥasan Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad Nūrī believed that Sufis should live in companionship (*ṣuḥbat*) with other people, for this allows them to learn tolerance by bending to the “wishes of others”. In this, says Hujwīrī, Nūrī agreed with Junayd, a well-known proponent of sobriety (*ṣaḥw*) over ecstasy (*sukr*):

It is a peculiarity of his (Nūrī’s) path that in companionship (*ṣuḥbat*), he gives preference to the wishes of others over one’s own, since he holds that companionship without deference to others is illicit (*ḥarām*). He adds that companionship (*ṣuḥbat*) is obligatory for dervishes, while seclusion (*‘uzlat*) is not commendable, for everyone should prefer his companion to himself. It is related that he said: “Shun seclusion (*‘uzlah*), for it means association with Satan; and enjoy companionship (*ṣuḥbah*), for therein is the pleasure of God.”

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XIV:5, KMM p.236; cf. KM pp.189–90

The ecstatic Bāyazīd (Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī) on the other hand, advocated living apart from the world:

With respect to spiritual practice, Bāyazīd’s doctrine involved shunning companionship (*ṣuḥbat*) and choosing seclusion (*‘uzlat*), which he enjoined upon his disciples. This is a commendable approach, involving a laudable mode of conduct, if it can be achieved.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XIV:3, KMM p.234; cf. KM p.188, in SSE7 p.156

Hujwīrī observes that, in his opinion, the ideal is to live in the world while remaining inwardly in seclusion, a viewpoint he associates with the Caliph ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (581–644), the second Caliph, who succeeded Abū Bakr (d.634 CE):

‘Umar said: “Retirement (*‘uzlat*) is a means of relieving oneself of bad company.” Retirement (*‘uzlat*) is of two sorts: firstly, turning

one’s back on mankind (*i’rāḡ az khalq*), and secondly, entire severance from them (*inqiṭā’ az īshān*). Turning one’s back on mankind consists of choosing a solitary retreat (*jāy khālī*), and in renouncing the society of one’s fellow creatures externally, and in quiet contemplation of the faults in one’s own conduct, and in seeking release for oneself from interaction with men, and in making all people secure from one’s evil actions.

But severance from mankind is a spiritual state, which is not connected with anything external. When a person is severed from mankind in spirit, he knows nothing of created beings, and no thought thereof can take possession of his mind. Such a person, although he is living among people, is isolated from them, and his spirit dwells apart from them. This is a very exalted station. ‘Umar followed the right path herein, for externally he lived among the people as their Commander and Caliph. His words show clearly that although the spiritually minded may outwardly mix with mankind, their hearts always cling to God, and return to Him in all circumstances. They regard any interaction they may have with men as an affliction sent by God; and that interaction does not divert them from God, since the world never becomes pure in the eyes of those whom God loves. ‘Umar said: “An abode that is founded upon affliction cannot possibly be without affliction.” The *ṣūfīs* make him their model in wearing a patched frock (*muraqqa’*) and rigorously performing the duties of religion.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb VII:2, KMM pp.81–82; cf. KM pp.72–73

Some of the Sufi poets also speak highly of seclusion. In the case of ‘Aṭṭār, it is uncertain whether he is speaking of internal or external seclusion:

Enter the glory of seclusion (*‘uzlat*):
For the *Sīmurgh* only became king of the birds
when he went into seclusion (*‘uzlat*).

‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān, Qaṣā’id 9:462, DASN p.29, in SSE7 p.8

Ḥāfiẓ, however, says clearly that the spiritual benefits people seek in seclusion do not actually come from seclusion itself, but from the “merciful glance” – the grace and guidance – of their *shaykh* or master:

The treasure of seclusion (*‘uzlat*) is guarded by bewitching spells;
Victory over them lies in the merciful glance of dervishes (*darvīshān*).

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.30, DIH p.76; cf. DHWC (36:2) p.98

As Ḥāfiẓ intimates, the “merciful glance” of a spiritually evolved soul can confer untold spiritual blessings upon the fortunate recipient.

vād(a) (S/Pa/H/Pu), **bād** (Pu) *Lit.* speech, discourse, talk, utterance, statement; debate, discussion; disputation, argument, controversy, dispute; doctrine, theory, philosophy, school of thought, exposition, explanation, demonstrated conclusion; dialogue or reasoning, with the intention of ascertaining the truth; dialectic; commonly appears as – *vāda* ‘theory of ...’ or ‘doctrine of ...’, as in the Buddhist *Theravāda* (teaching of the elders, ancient teaching), *śhūnya-vāda* (doctrine of the void), *kriyā-vāda* (doctrine of actions, doctrine that actions have consequences), and a great many others in the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions.

The multitude of diverse doctrines and schools of thought – past, present, and no doubt in the future – bears witness to the tremendous ingenuity and divergence among the minds of human beings. It is clear that given the diverse and often contrary nature of human opinions, some – if not many – opinions or schools of thought must be misguided or at least incomplete. Indeed, adherence to a particular opinion, doctrine or dogma would seem to be more a matter of individual temperament and cultural background than the result of a truly objective and rational understanding.

In mystic literature, it is often said that God or the ultimate Reality cannot be known by debate or argument; nor is a philosophical theory or doctrine a substitute for experience of the Absolute. Indian *sants* observe:

Death over his head laughs derisively;
Man, thoughtless as an animal (*pasū*), realizes not this.
Caught in disputation (*bād*), pleasure, pride –
of death is man unmindful.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 809, AGT

And say:

The scholar studies disputation (*vād*)
and contemplates not the *Vedas*.
How may any, sinking himself, save his forebears?

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 904, AGT

Vaishṇava (S/H) *Lit.* of *Vishṇu*; one of the principal schools of devotional Hinduism, whose followers worship *Vishṇu* and his incarnations (*avatāras*), especially Rāma and Kṛishṇa, as the supreme God; the division of Hinduism to which the largest number of people adhere; also, a follower of this school, a Vaishnavite.

The origins of Vaishnavism are lost in the distant past. Stemming from the worship of *Vishṇu* as the Vedic solar deity, the worship of *Vishṇu* as the supreme God seems to have been prevalent by the time the *Mahābhārata*

(possibly C9th–8th BCE) and *Rāmāyaṇa* (possibly C5th–4th BCE) were written, and has remained a long-term facet of Hinduism. Vaishnavism enjoyed a resurgence during the *bhakti* movement that swept through India in medieval times. In modern times, the second half of the twentieth century saw the rise of the Hare Krishna Movement, more properly known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), founded in New York in 1966 by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896–1977). More recently, various other *Vaishṇava* schools, such as the Pure Bhakti Yoga Society of Bhaktivedanta Swami Narayana Maharaj have claimed some degree of popular attention.

The popularity of Vaishnavism is rooted in the belief in *avatāras*, earthly incarnations of *Vishṇu* who take birth to protect humanity in time of need. As Kṛishṇa (understood as an incarnation of *Vishṇu*) says in the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

Whenever righteousness (*dharma*) declines, O Bhārata,
and unrighteousness (*adharma*) is in the ascendant –
Then I manifest myself for the protection of good,
and the destruction of evil.
For establishment of righteousness (*dharma*),
I am born from age to age.
O Arjuna, he who understands the essential nature
of my incarnation and my actions,
is not reborn on leaving the body, but comes to Me.

Bhagavad Gītā 4:7–9

Vaishnavism teaches the ideal of love and devotion for God, and complete surrender to Him. He is understood as the *Antaryāmī* (inner Knower), present in all hearts. The popular appeal of scriptures such as the *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* is perhaps because they concern themselves with this proximity of God to man, and His concern for the welfare of humanity, through the medium of his *avatāras*. *Vaishṇava* doctrine encompasses much of what is commonly associated with Hinduism, including monotheism, reincarnation and *karma* theory, together with the various systems of *yoga*, and the tradition of initiation from a personal spiritual guide in the form of a *guru*. Vaishnavites are also traditionally vegetarian. In fact, the Hindi term for vegetarianism is *Vaishṇav bhojan* (food of the *Vaishṇavas*). There is, however, a wide range of philosophical schools that may be described as Vaishnavite. The differences between them reflect the fundamental debates of Indian philosophy, namely, *dvaita* (dualism), *advaita* (non-dualism, absolute monism), and *dvaitādvaita* (qualified monism).

See also: **Shaiva**, **Shākta**.

vajra (S), **rdo rje** (T), **jīngāng** (C), **kongō** (J) *Lit.* thunderbolt, diamond, adamant; something extremely hard or powerful; originating in India, and common to Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain traditions; first mentioned in the *Ṛig Veda*, where it appears as the thunderbolt weapon of *Indra*, chief of the gods; a magical, ritual implement used especially in Tibetan *Vajrayāna* (tantric or esoteric) Buddhism, where it symbolizes indestructibility, immutability and power, especially that of the eternal, unchanging Reality or Essence within all things.

In the *Ṛig Veda*, *Indra*'s *vajra* is made for him by *Tvaṣṭri*, the heavenly builder and maker of divine implements. *Indra* uses the weapon to slay the evil *Vṛitra*, demon (*asura*) of darkness and drought, who had taken the form of a serpent. Various modifications and elaborations of the story are found in the *Purāṇas*. *Indra* also uses the *vajra* to bring death to "many grievous sinners".¹ In the *Ṛig Veda*, *Indra* is known by a number of names related to his skill in wielding the *vajra*, including *Vajrabhṛit* (*vajra* bearer) and *Vajrin* (armed with the *vajra*), the latter being the most frequent epithet. Although the *Ṛig Veda* indicates that the *vajra* was thrown and is made of iron, no information is given regarding its shape.²

The term appears in a variety of contexts as a part of numerous other terms, expressions, descriptions, and proper names. In Buddhism, it is often used as a catch-all word to denote something associated with the tantric tradition, making it impossible to translate. The many such terms include: *Vajrayāna* (*vajra* vehicle), the tantric Buddhist teachings and path; *vajraparyanka* (*vajra* posture), the traditional cross-legged Buddha posture, which is like the traditional yogic lotus posture (*padmāsana*), but with the position of the legs reversed – right over left, rather than left over right; *vajrajāpa* (*vajra* repetition), the first of the five stages on the path of *anuttara-yoga tantra*; *vajrajvala* (blazing *vajra*), one of eight charnel grounds portrayed in tantric Buddhist art; *vajropama-samādhi* (highest *samādhi*, like a *vajra*); *vajraprajñā* (*vajra* wisdom), the eternally indestructible and highest wisdom; *vajrāchārya* (*vajra* teacher), an *āchārya* or *guru* who is a master of tantric practice; *vajrābhisheka* (*vajra* initiation), one of a sequence of initiations received by a tantric disciple; *Vajra Sūtra* ('Diamond *Sūtra*'); and so on.

The construction of tantric *vajras* varies around a common theme. The basic shape is that of a single- or double-headed club or short sceptre with open, symmetrical, spherical ends constructed either of 'ribs' closed at their ends, or of open sharp-pointed 'ribs' for use as a symbolic weapon. In the latter case, the number of prongs can vary from one to nine, the most common being five. *Vajras* are often made of bronze, ornately carved and bejewelled. Sometimes, a *vajra* is constructed as a discus with a central hole, or in the form of a cross, each of the four arms bearing a spherical end. Tantric rituals often entail the use of several, variously pronged *vajras*.

Tantric or esoteric Buddhism (*Vajrayāna*) is one of Buddhism's three main branches, and the *vajra* along with the *ghaṇṭā* (hand bell), often with

a *vajra* handle, are the two most important ritual items. The *vajra* is usually held in the right hand and the *ghaṇṭā* in the left. A proliferation of symbolic meanings have been attributed to the *vajra* and *ghaṇṭā*. Generally, the adamant nature of the *vajra* (T. *rdo rje*) is said to represent compassion and appropriate or skilful means (*upāya-kaushalya*) of teaching, and reflects the masculine principle. The *ghaṇṭā* is said to represent the *pāramitā* (perfection) of wisdom (*prajñā*), perceived as an aspect of the feminine principle. In the tantric tradition, enlightenment is understood to arise from the union of these two principles and the consequent transcendence of duality. The *vajra* also symbolizes the indestructible, changeless nature of *shūnyatā* as the ultimate Reality. It represents the utterly unshakeable nature of an enlightened one. It is also a symbol of the phallus. The five-pronged *vajra*, with one central and four surrounding ribs or spikes, is the commonest form.

When a five-pronged *vajra* is held vertically, with the five prongs pointing to the ground, the prongs signify the five aggregates of mind and body (*skandhas*, the five constituent elements of physical and mental being) or the five mental impurities (*kleshās*) of ignorance (*avidyā*), pride (*māna*), desire (*rāga*) or greed (*lobha*), aversion (*dvesha*), and jealousy (*īrshyā*). Through tantric rituals, the five impurities are transformed into the five wisdoms (*pañcha-jñāna*), represented by the five prongs when pointed upwards.

The five wisdoms are associated with the five celestial or *dhyāni buddhas*, viz. Vairocana, Akshobhya, Amitābha, Ratnasambhava, and Amoghasiddhi. The five *dhyāni buddhas* each represent one of five kinds of wisdom, which are (respectively): primordial awareness, mirror-like wisdom, wisdom of discriminating awareness, wisdom of tranquillity, and all-accomplishing wisdom. This transformation from impurity to wisdom is achieved through realization of emptiness (*shūnyatā*), the primordial nature of existence, which is symbolized by the empty centre of the enclosed end of the *vajra*. In some instances, two eight-petalled lotus flowers emerge from the closed spherical end. One symbolizes *saṃsāra*, the phenomenal world of transient material things and transmigration; the other represents the realm of true being, *nirvāṇa*. But, according to the paradoxical nature of the way things are, both emerge from the same primal emptiness.

In tantric art and sculpture, three figures in particular are depicted holding a *vajra*. Seated in the cross-legged posture, the tantric deity *Vajrasattva* ('*Vajra* being') holds the *vajra* in his right hand at the level of his heart; in his left hand he holds the *ghaṇṭā*, his palm upward, resting in his lap. The wrathful Vajrapāṇi (bearer of the *vajra*), a *bodhisattva* also known as Vajradhara, brandishes the *vajra* above his head in his right hand. Vajradhara has much in common with *Indra*, with whom he is sometimes identified. And lastly, Padmasambhava, an eighth-century Buddhist *guru* credited with having introduced tantric Buddhism into Tibet and with founding the Red sect or *Nyingma* ('Old Order'), holds the *vajra* in his right hand above his right knee.

See also: **Vajradhara** (►1), **Vajrayāna** (►4).

1. *Ṛig Veda* 1:32.1–15, 2:12.10.
2. Malati Shendge, *Civilized Demons*, CDHR p.79.

vandan(a) (S/Pa/H) *Lit.* veneration, worship, adoration, homage, obeisance, praise, salutation; in Hindu tradition, as *sandhyā-vandana* (daily worship), an ancient liturgy traditionally offered by the three higher castes in the morning, midday, and evening; in Buddhism, reverence of the Buddha and *bodhi-sattvas* (symbolically represented as images, idols, a *bodhi* tree, a *stūpa*, etc.), as in *pañchanga-vandana* (obeisance with five parts of the body), which is a form of ritualized obeisance or prostration in which the head, knees and forearms are touched to the ground; in Jainism, one of the six *āvashyakas*, the obligatory practices of a mendicant that are also recommended to the laity; also known as *stuti* (praise, eulogy, adoration). The intention behind the various expressions of *vandana* is to inculcate love, humility and gratitude, and to protect the mind from impure thoughts.

Three forms of *vandana* are commonly mentioned in Jain texts:¹

1. *Guru-vandana*. Ritualized reverence for *arahantas* (enlightened ones), *siddhas* (perfected and liberated ones) and the *āchāryas* (teachers) of an individual's particular sub-tradition; veneration of one's mendicant preceptor.
2. *Deva-vandana*. Veneration of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* by recitation of the hymn *Chaturviṃshati Stava*, which means 'Praise (*stava*) of the Twenty-Four (*chaturviṃshati*)' *Tīrthankaras*.
3. *Chaitya-vandana*. Veneration of the image of a *Tīrthankara* or *Jina*; an extension of the *āvashyaka* of *Chaturviṃshati Stava* or *stuti* among image-worshipping, Jain sub-traditions, and which includes the other *āvashyakas* of *pratikramāṇa* (confession) and *kāyotsarga* (abandonment of the body). A rite that can be performed by the laity as both external (*dravya*, actual), before an image of a *Tīrthankara*, or as mental (*bhāva*) worship (*pūjā*), entirely in the mind.

See also: **āvashyaka**.

1. See "vandana," *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

varsha, vārshika (S), **vassa** (Pa), **vas** (Sinhala), **dbyar gnas** (T), **ānjū** (C), **ango** (J), **was** (Thai) *Lit.* rains (*varsha, vassa, was*); rainy season; belonging

to the rainy season (*vārshika*); summer rains (*dbyar*) retreat or dwelling (*gnas*); peaceful (*ān*) dwelling (*jū*); in Buddhism, terms for the three-month rainy-season retreat or rains residence, observed mostly by monastics of the *Theravāda* tradition, but also in the largely *Mahāyāna* Vietnamese monasteries, and in the monasteries of *Zen* and Tibetan Buddhism; sometimes called Buddhist Lent. Monastic seniority, known as a monk's *dharma* age, is counted in terms of the number of rains retreats.

From the earliest Buddhist times, monks and nuns have lived an itinerant lifestyle for nine months of the year, only remaining at one place during the rainy season. Then, as now, the intention was to devote time to intensive meditation, study of the Buddhist scriptures, listening to *dharma* talks, mutual support and encouragement, service to the monastic community, and so on. In present times, some monks adopt a vegetarian diet, and this may have been customary in the time of the Buddha. The monks or nuns lived in temporary huts (*vihāra*) constructed for the purpose on some otherwise unused area of ground, often on the outskirts of a village, or on land donated for the use of the *sangha*, where they would live with just the bare necessities. With the passage of time, the itinerant custom has been largely abandoned, but the tradition of the rainy-season retreat is still maintained. Over time, the temporary rains residences became semi-permanent, and it is probable that it was collections of such accommodation that gradually developed into the first monasteries. The development of monasteries and temples provided monks with a permanent and comfortable location in which to pass the rainy-season retreat.

In India, where Buddhism began, the rainy season can last four months, though the retreat is only for three. A monk is free to choose whether his three-month retreat will be the first or the last three of the four month period.¹ Nowadays, especially outside India, although customs vary, the rains retreat is generally for a fixed three-month period. After the retreat, monks may continue to follow an itinerant lifestyle or may go to another monastery. The period of the retreat is calculated on the lunar calendar, with the commonly established three-month period starting on the day after the full-moon day of the eighth lunar month (*Āsālha*) and ending on *Pavāraṇā* Day, also a full-moon day. On the Gregorian calendar, this usually falls between July and October.

The full-moon day in *Āsālha*, also known as *Dhamma* Day, is celebrated as the day on which the Buddha gave his first discourse, in the deer park near *Vārāṇasī*. In Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, the monsoon does not exactly correspond with these timings, but the retreat is nevertheless held at these times in accordance with the ancient tradition. On *Pavāraṇā* Day, monastics gather together to publicly confess improper conduct and transgressions of the *pātimokkha* (Pa. rules of monastic discipline), to invite their fellow monks to report on any lapses they may have seen, heard or suspected, and to repent of their misdemeanours. The retreat is followed by the *kaṭhina*

ceremony in which the laity donate robes or robe cloth in gratitude for the teaching provided by the monastics. If any monks have been absent for more than seven nights for no acceptable reason, they become ineligible to receive the donation of robes or robe cloth.

The rains retreat was a tradition followed by many schools of wandering ascetics and holy men in pre-Buddhist times, including the Jains. Jain itinerants observe the rains retreat in order to avoid damaging crops and harming small creatures that abound in the rainy season. According to the *Mahāvagga* section of the *Vinaya Piṭaka*,² the books of monastic discipline, written some time after his death, the Buddha inaugurated a rains retreat for his disciples in acknowledgement of such concerns. Other practical reasons for remaining at one place during the rainy season included the difficulties of travel during the monsoon, and concern for the health and safety of his monks and nuns, since they were clad only in sandals and flimsy robes, wandering from place to place, and begging for alms.

It is clear that by the time the *Mahāvagga* was written, the *sangha* was growing and some monasteries had already been established. As stipulated in the *Mahāvagga*, monastics may leave their monastery or chosen location for no more than seven nights during the retreat. Acceptable reasons for absence include parental illness, an invitation to teach the *Dhamma*, attending to the needs of a probationer or someone who wishes to be ordained, or to attend to significant monastic affairs such as the donation of land or other property – so long as all such affairs can be conducted within seven days. The rains retreat can also be cut short by events such as the dwellings being destroyed by fire or flood, insufficient food, lack of medicines or doctors, attack by bandits or beasts of prey, being solicited by a woman, or some of the monastics trying to create a schism in the order.

The *Mahāvagga* also lists a number of places deemed suitable or unsuitable for passing the rains retreat. Unlikely but suitable places include a cow pen and a boat, while places deemed unsuitable are hollow trees, the fork of a tree, the open air without any lodgings, a charnel house, under a sunshade, and in a water jar!

The Zen Buddhist *ango* has its origins in the *vassa*, with most monasteries conducting a retreat in the summer (April–July or May–August) and many holding a second during the winter (November–January). For novice monks, these retreats serve for mental training such as studying of *sūtras*, attending lectures, copying scriptures, and meditation; for senior monks they are dedicated mainly to meditation. The rules regarding the *ango* are generally more strict, with monks spending as many as fourteen hours a day in sitting meditation (*zazen*), especially during the winter retreat. The rules regarding absence from the monastery are likewise more stringent, and a monastic may not even be told of the death of a parent until the retreat is over. In the West, the rules are more relaxed with those who need to go out to work being allowed to stay at the monastery and participate in the retreat as much as they are able.

The Indian Buddhist tradition of summer retreats during the rainy season reached Japan through China. The practice was introduced to Japan by the *Zen* master Dōgen (1200–1253), founder of the *Sōtō Zen* school, after a visit to China. Dōgen considered the practice to be of great importance, dedicating a chapter of his monumental *Shōbōgenzō* to a lengthy discussion of his understanding of what constitutes a real rains retreat and the rules that should govern it.³ Dōgen also opened the practice to include lay male and female trainees.

In Thailand, where well over ninety percent of the population are Buddhists of the *Theravāda* tradition, it is customary for all male children to be ordained as novice monks and to spend some time in a monastery. The period of the rains retreat is commonly deemed to be an auspicious time for this purpose. Allowing a boy to spend this time in a monastery is regarded as the greatest religious gift that parents can give to their child, and is thought to have a lasting effect on a boy's life.

See also: **āvāsa**, **chāturmāsa**, **kaṭhina**, **pravāraṇā**, **uposhadha**.

1. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga* 3, *PTSVI* p.137.
2. *Vinaya Piṭaka, Mahāvagga* 3, *PTSVI* pp.137–56.
3. Eihei Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō, Ango*, T82 2582:260c–67a.

vāsakshepa (S), **vāskēp** (Pk) *Lit.* perfume (*vāsa*) sprinkling (*kshepa*); a fragrant mix of fine sandalwood powder, to which saffron, camphor and other fragrant substances have been added, and which is believed to possess protective and auspicious powers when energized by a Jain mendicant by recitation of *mantras*; sprinkled as a blessing by *Shvetāmbara Mūrtipūjaka*s (image worshippers), especially during Jain rituals such as initiation, the blessing of a religious book, the worship of *Tīrthankara* images, and so on; sometimes sprinkled by mendicants on the heads of laypeople when bestowing a blessing, and subsequently kept by laypeople as an auspicious material, and which they may sprinkle on the right big toe of a monk during the performance of *guru-vandana* (*guru* worship).¹

1. See “vāsakṣepa,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

vesh(a) (S/H), **bhesh** (H), **bhekh** (H/Pu) *Lit.* dress, guise, garb; guise, disguise, assumed appearance; the particular dress or clothing worn by the various orders of *yogīs*, *sannyāsīs*, *vairāgīs*, *udāsīs*, and *sādhus*; hence, a member of the various sects and orders of renunciate and ascetic, also called *bhekhdārī* (one who has assumed a garb).

Indian *sants* have observed that outer garments do not indicate inner holiness. In fact, they may even disguise hypocrisy:

Those who appear in holy guise (*vesh*),
 deliver artful holy speeches,
 but are not free from craving land, wealth, and home;
 Employing many means to nourish and nurture their bodies,
 they verbally proclaim the Name of *Rām* as their only support;
 They make a public display of devotion,
 concealing evil motivations,
 while their minds remain a dwelling ground
 for lust, greed, and attachment;
 Yet such devotees, . . .
 full of passion, anger, envy, deceit, and crookedness,
 wish to attain devotion to *Rām*!

Tulsīdās, Kavītāvalī 7:119, KVTD pp.122–23; cf. TGTD pp.294–95

You have assumed the guise (*bhesh*) of a holy person,
 but you know not the secret of the Lord's holiness –
 You have mixed nectar with poison.
 You have wasted your life in lust and anger:
 you have not sung God's glory in the company of the holy.
 You have put on sandalwood marks,
 but the fever of worldliness subsides not thereby,
 and by carrying rosaries you have brought
 an abundance of greed to yourself.
 If you obtain the secrets of holiness, says Ravidās,
 you will meditate on the stainless Lord, the unsurpassed Truth.

Ravidās, Vāṇī 77, SGRV p.100; cf. GRPS pp.173–74

They belong to the human species,
 but they act like animals.
 They curse others day and night.
 Outwardly, they wear religious robes (*bhekh*),
 but within is the filth of *māyā* (illusion).
 They cannot conceal this,
 no matter how hard they try.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 267, AGK

Neither the wearing of religious apparel nor many other practices are effective
 in bringing the soul close to the Divine:

Wearing various religious robes (*bhekh*),
 the fire (of desire) is not extinguished.
 Even making millions of efforts,
 you shall not be accepted in the court of the Lord.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 266, AGK

It is only contact with the divine Name (*Nām*) or Word that can take a soul back to God:

Through *Nām*, everything is revealed:
 through *Nām*, understanding is obtained.
 Without *Nām*, people wear all sorts of religious robes (*bhekh*):
 the true Lord Himself has confused them.
Nām is obtained only from the *satguru*, O hermit,
 and then the way of *yoga* is found.
 Reflect upon this in your mind, and see;
 O Nanak, without *Nām*, there is no liberation (*mukat*).

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 946, AGK

See also: **bhikshu** (7.1).

viaticum (L) *Lit.* something for a journey; provisions for a journey; from *viaticus*, pertaining to a road or journey (*via*); a single Latin word that translates the Greek words for the provisions for a journey (food, money, clothing, *etc.*), as well as a supper customarily given to those setting out on a journey; in Christianity, the Eucharist (holy communion) administered to someone in danger of death, and presumed to be about to undertake the ‘last journey’, with the intention that it should provide a last-minute forgiveness of sins.

The notion of a *viaticum* for the soul on its journey to the next world is a widespread belief, found in ancient Egyptian and Iranian religions, as well as Buddhism, Hinduism, gnosticism, and Christianity. The nature of the soul’s supposed needs varies, of course, according to the belief system.

Probably all religious doctrines are agreed upon the existence of ‘sin’ and the necessity of forgiveness; and though each religion has its own way of understanding and expressing it, the full extent and nature of the matter may not be truly understandable in words. Various rituals, confessionals and so on have been devised in order to deal with the issue, but although these may have some psychological benefit, the root of the problem is not addressed. In a scathing observation on the consumption of ritually blessed food and drink in the hope of attaining perfection, a Mandaean poet says:

If you take mountains of food as your *viaticum* for eating,
 they will not make you whole.
 If you take seas for your drinking,
 they will not make you perfect.
 But if with perfection you stand before . . . the eternal abode,
 I will count your number, and your reckoning shall be reckoned.

Mandaean Prayer Book 76; cf. CPM pp.79–80

The writer points out that the ritual consumption of food and drink, regardless of the amount consumed or of the accompanying liturgical recitations will not make a person whole or perfect, that is – free from sin. What is required is help of a spiritual kind, brought by a saviour to the soul. As another Mandaean text has it:

While the soul stands there in meditation,
the man, its helper, comes.
Its great helper comes,
who brings the *viaticum* and food for the journey.
Mandaean Ginza (Treasury), TLM1 (12ff.) p.40; cf. in GVM p.79

See also: **Eucharist**.

vidhān(a) (S/H) *Lit.* performance (of a ritual); a particular ritual itself; also, a name given to a body of ancillary Vedic literature, written during the fifth to third centuries BCE, containing details of how to perform various rituals, and representing a transition between the older Vedic texts and practices and those of the later *Purāṇas*.

Each of the four *Vedas* has a body of *vidhāna* texts relating to it, an abridged form of which appears in the *Agni* and *Vishṇu-dharmottara Purāṇas*. The *vidhāna* rites often relate to the worship of particular deities, especially *Rudra*, *Vishṇu* and *Lakshmī*, or their propitiation by the recitation of particular *mantras*. The intention of the rituals is much the same as for the primary Vedic rites – viz. long life, health, removal of sickness, elimination of sin, wealth, children, fruitful crops, cattle, victory over enemies, knowledge, and so on. Significantly, however, *vidhāna* rites can be performed by the individual in the absence of a *brāhmaṇ* (priest), and the general intention seems to have been to make the rituals more accessible to the lay worshipper. The literature dates from a time when religious ritual was an integral aspect of daily life.

As well as the characteristic features of recitations and offerings in fire, the rituals include other common elements such as the preparation and use of amulets, anointing the body, bathing in consecrated water, and the giving of gifts to and the feeding of *brāhmaṇs*. Some rituals are geared towards use in respect of a particular person, involving the name or an image of that individual, a feature usually absent from the older Vedic rituals.

In addition to the traditional substances and food offerings used in Vedic ritual, such as ghee, oils, grains, cooked foods and sticks for burning, *vidhāna* rituals include a variety of more specific items including roots, thorns, honey, flowers, blood, poison, flesh, and salt.¹

1. See Pradnya Kulkarni, “Importance of the Vidhana Texts,” *IVRD*.

vihāra (S/Pa) *Lit.* abode, residence, dwelling, monastery; originally, temporary huts or dwellings occupied by individual Buddhist monks or nuns during the rainy season (*varsha*), but which evolved into permanent residences, monasteries, and temples; also, posture, state of conduct, internal state of consciousness or being; a general term used in a variety of contexts, both literal and metaphorical. See **varsha**, **vihāra** (8.1).

vinati (S/H), **vinatī**, **binatī**, **binṭī** (H), **benatī** (H/Pu), **bentī** (Pu) *Lit.* bowing down, bending; thus, humility, modesty; a humble request, prayer, supplication, or hymn.

The devotee sees the Divine as the all in all. There is no one else but Him, and no one else to turn to:

Prays Nānak, please hear my prayer (*bentī*):
 You are the pool and You are the soul-swan (*hans*).
 You are the lotus flower of the day
 and the water lily of the night.
 You Yourself behold them,
 and blossom forth in bliss.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 23, AGK

He is the one who can rescue the soul from the clutches of negativity:

With hands together in prayer (*benatī*)
 I beseech you, *Rādhā Swāmī*, listen to my supplication.
 You are the true Being, my benevolent master!
 You are the father, mother, and creator of all beings.
 Be merciful to me, accept me,
 and set me free from the snare of *Kāl* ('Time', 'Death').

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 7:1.1–3, SBP p.69

virgin birth A fundamental doctrine of orthodox Christianity that Jesus had no natural human father but was born to Mary, who conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, and who miraculously remained a virgin during the birth of her child (in that she was spared the pain of childbirth), and throughout her later life; based on the infancy narratives related in *Matthew* and *Luke*, though absent from all other New Testament documents, including *Mark* and *John*, and the letters of Paul. Though challenged by a number of gnostic and other early Christian groups, the belief was widely accepted by the second century, and has remained so in most branches of Christianity, although, since the nineteenth century, it has been challenged by liberal elements within the Protestant churches.

The additional belief that Mary had not only been subject to a miraculous conception, but had also remained a virgin throughout her life, has always been a matter of debate within the Church. First appearing in the mid-second-century, the belief is found in the writings of some of the early fathers, and was later accepted as orthodox doctrine by the Council of Chalcedon (451). But this is not supported by the gospels. According to *Matthew*, after Joseph had married Mary, following her conception of Jesus, Joseph “knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son.”¹ The existence of Jesus’ brothers and sisters makes this an even more difficult doctrine to support, but it remains a part of Orthodox and Catholic teaching, and is accepted by some theologians of other churches.

Since neither *John* nor *Mark* make any mention of a virgin birth, it seems more than likely that the writers of these two gospels did not hold the belief or had not heard of it, for surely they would otherwise have mentioned it. By the time that John’s gospel was compiled, the belief was certainly in existence, for it was recorded in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Moreover, if the writer of the major part of John’s gospel was indeed John the apostle, then he would have been a close companion of Jesus, the one to whom Jesus had entrusted his mother after his death. Having been so close to them, it is hardly likely that he would have failed to mention such a momentous and significant fact, had it been true.

In the case of Mark, not only does he make no mention of it, despite his love of the miraculous, he also relates that Jesus ignores his mother and brothers when told that they were standing outside, wanting to talk to him. In fact, according to Mark, Jesus responds that his real mother and brothers are those sitting around him and those who live in the will of God.² Although the anecdote is probably only a setting for Jesus’ observation, Mark would hardly have invented or related such a story if he had held Jesus’ mother in esteem as having given birth to Jesus by divine intervention. It also seems unlikely that Jesus would have spoken of his mother in such a fashion, whether or not she had given birth to him by miraculous means.

Matthew and Luke both copy over Mark’s story of Jesus’ response to his mother and brothers,³ but while the more literal Matthew copies Mark almost verbatim, despite its incongruity alongside his story of the virgin birth, Luke truncates and softens Jesus’ response to make it more acceptable and probable. Even so, although the use of Mark’s anecdote by Matthew and Luke is perhaps surprising, it becomes understandable when it is appreciated that the cult and worship of the Virgin Mary were not prevalent when they were writing. It was a later introduction stemming from second-century embellishments to her life story, though even less is known of her than of Jesus. Moreover, the modern critical requirement for all aspects of a narrative to be compatible with each other is unlikely to have been so foremost in the minds of the evangelists. The gospels were not written to appeal to reason so much as to faith.

Apart from the two short narratives at the beginning of *Matthew* and *Luke*, there are no further references to the subject anywhere else in the gospels. Not one of the sayings or parables of Jesus ever refers to it. Jesus never speaks about his early life, and he clearly gave equally little importance to the history of his birth. In fact, in the entire New Testament, the virgin birth is *only* mentioned in *Matthew* and *Luke*. Neither Paul – whose letters date from the 50s and 60s – nor *Acts*, nor the *Book of Revelation*, nor the writers of any of the other epistles, even hint at it. Given his loquacious character, one would have expected Paul to speak of it had he considered it a part of Christian belief, just as he constantly reiterates his belief in Jesus' physical resurrection. Indeed, one wonders whether the idea was even extant during Paul's lifetime, for surely he would have encountered it and given his opinion on the matter, even if he had not believed in it. Indeed, Paul speaks of the physical birth of Jesus using explicitly physical terms:

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness.

Romans 1:3–4, KJV

Furthermore, not only are the infancy stories provided by Matthew and Luke are historically incompatible, the two virgin-birth stories also have their differences. Matthew relates:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ happened in this manner. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Ghost. So Joseph her husband, being a good man, and desiring to spare her public humiliation, resolved to divorce her quietly.

But while he was considering the matter, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she will bear a son, and you must name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."

Now all this took place in order to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet, "Behold, a virgin will conceive, and will give birth to a son, and they will name him Emmanuel,"⁴ which means 'God is with us'.

When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took her as his wife; and he knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son; and he called his name Jesus.

Matthew 1:18–25; cf. JB, KJV, RSV

Luke, on the other hand, records that:

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came to her, and said, "Hail, you who are highly favoured, the Lord is with you: blessed are you among women."

And she was troubled at his words, and wondered to herself what such a salutation could mean. And the angel said to her, "Have no fear, Mary: for you have found favour with God. And, behold, you will conceive in your womb, and will bear a son, and will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Then said Mary to the angel, "How can this be, seeing I know not a man?"

And the angel said to her, "The Holy Ghost will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you: therefore the child to be born will be holy and will be called the Son of God. And, behold, your cousin Elizabeth, she has also conceived a son in her old age; and she who was called barren is in her sixth month; for with God nothing is impossible."

And Mary said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Luke 1:26–38; cf. JB, KJV, RSV

In *Matthew*, it is Joseph who meets the angel; in *Luke*, it is Mary. And the meeting constitutes the bulk of the story. The two stories are not essentially incompatible, of course, but the variants seem more like the ramifications of storytelling, rather than history. Matthew, characteristically, also has a quote from scripture prefaced with his familiar introduction, "All this took place in order to fulfil ...". It has been pointed out many times, however, that Matthew's quote from *Isaiah* refers to a maiden or young (even married) woman, not necessarily a virgin. In any case, when seen in its context, whatever the whole passage from *Isaiah* may mean, it requires more than a fair stretch of the imagination to conclude that it is a prophecy concerning Jesus. This has been an entirely Christian claim, something that Judaism has never accepted.

Jesus' Brothers and Sisters

There is also the knotty problem of Jesus' brothers and sisters. Four brothers and two sisters is the total usually mentioned. It is Mark who introduces them, to whom they cause no embarrassment, since he does not subscribe to

the belief in a virgin birth. They appear in the narrative when Jesus returns to Galilee, where the people knew him from his childhood. Surprised at his wisdom and his teachings, they say:

“Is this not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, Judas, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they were offended at him.

But Jesus, said to them, “A prophet is not without honour, but in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house.” And he did no mighty work there, except laying his hands upon a few sick folk and healing them.

Mark 6:3–5; cf. KJV

In characteristically Marcan style, although Jesus can do “no mighty work” in Galilee, he still manages to heal a “few sick folk” – throwaway miracles one might call them. When dealing with this passage, the more literal and conservative Matthew copies Mark almost verbatim,⁵ and one presumes that he had no reservations concerning Jesus being the eldest of Mary’s large family.

Luke also adds to his story of Jesus’ birth that Mary “brought forth her firstborn son”,⁶ leading the reader to presume that she had more children later. But Luke is evidently uncomfortable about naming Jesus’ brothers and sisters, for he modifies Mark’s tale of Jesus’ visit to Galilee, omitting all mention of them:

And they said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” And he said to them, “You will doubtless quote me the proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself’; whatever we have heard that you did in Capernaum, do here also in your own country.” And he said, “Verily, I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his own country.”

Luke 4:22–24; cf. KJV, RSV

By omitting Jesus’ brothers and sisters, Luke leaves the saying concerning the acceptability of a prophet in his own country without a lead-in, especially since he finds it necessary to omit Mark’s reference to “his own kin” since it has no relevance in the absence of Jesus’ brothers and sisters. To compensate, he introduces a unique contribution: “Physician, heal yourself”. If Luke was really the ‘Doctor Luke’ of Paul’s letters, then the saying would no doubt have struck him professionally, but in the context it fits awkwardly, leaving the narrative and Jesus’ words without continuity, exhibiting the telltale signs of an editorial hand. Luke, then, felt uncomfortable with Mark’s naming of Jesus’ brothers and sisters; and one wonders why, especially since Luke later mentions Jesus’ mother and brothers in the incident where they ask to see him, while in *Acts*, he depicts them as a part of the circle of apostles.⁷

John also speaks of Jesus' brothers, stating unequivocally, "neither did his brothers believe in him",⁸ and since there is no good reason why such a comment should have been invented, it is likely to be founded upon some truth.

From the historical evidence, there is no doubt that Jesus did have at least one brother, James, because Paul and other writers speak of him and there is even a letter attributed to him in the New Testament. Paul had actually met James, and would probably have known the exact relationship that he bore to Jesus, and the part he played in the early Christian community at Jerusalem. Even the first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, mentions him.⁹ But the matter of Jesus' brothers and sisters is clearly an embarrassment to those Christians who believed in the virgin birth, particularly since – according to tradition, and despite Luke and Matthew's observation concerning Jesus as Mary's "firstborn son" – they all seem to have been *older* than Jesus.

The existence of older brothers and sisters was clearly at variance with any stories of a virgin birth, and a number of explanations were put forward which attempted to account for the difficulty. Perhaps the most ingenious of these was the tale that Joseph had been a widower, whose previous wife had borne him six children. Joseph was then betrothed to Mary and subsequently married her after "she was found to be with child through the Holy Ghost".¹⁰ Thereafter, they raised James and the other children, including Jesus, whom Joseph represented as his own.

The story's first appearance in an extant document is in the second- or third-century infancy gospel, the *Protoevangelium of James*,¹¹ but it had probably been around in the oral tradition for some time previously. This writing was of considerable popularity well into medieval times and a large number of manuscripts of it are to be found, many containing significant variations. The story is also encountered in the Coptic *Death of Joseph*, where it is also stated that Joseph's first wife had died while James was still "little", and that the names of Jesus' half-sisters were Lydia and Lysia.¹² Epiphanius (C4th), on the other hand, says in his *Panarion* that their names were Mary and Salome,¹³ although in his earlier *Ancoratus* he calls them Anna and Salome.¹⁴

But there remain a number of difficulties even with this version of events. Why, for example, are these brothers and sisters not mentioned by Luke and Matthew in their infancy stories? James would certainly have been too young to have been left at home while his parents travelled to Bethlehem or Egypt, depending on whose version of the story you read. Moreover, if Luke's story of the census was correct, then the entire family would have been required to travel to Bethlehem. Yet the gospel stories never portray Joseph and Mary as travelling with six variously aged children in tow.

It is unlikely that the true history of Jesus and his family will ever be known, nor does it make any difference to his teachings. These discrepancies are mentioned simply to highlight the incompatibilities between the various virgin-birth and associated stories. Like chickens in a farmyard invaded by a

hungry dog or like naughty children trying to explain themselves when caught red-handed, the variants of the story scatter once reality is abandoned. The most likely explanation is that Jesus was simply a child from a large family. But that, of course, does not satisfy the advocates of a virgin birth.

The House of His Servant David

Luke and Matthew also make the curious attempt to trace Jesus' family tree. But they present two entirely different genealogies in which practically all the names differ. Even the name of Joseph's father differs, appearing as Jacob in *Matthew* and as Heli in *Luke*. Luke is also more ambitious. Starting with Joseph, he traces Jesus' ancestry back through David, all the way to Adam, while Matthew starts with Abraham and works forward. These genealogies have almost certainly been inserted by Luke and Matthew from independent written sources, their purpose being to prove that Jesus had been born into the 'house of David', also having Abraham for an ancestor. There were probably many such genealogies in existence at that time, for there were always many claimants to the messiahship and names could very easily be changed as necessary.

Moreover, since these family lineages both lead to Joseph as the father of Jesus, they probably came from the pens of those who did not give credence to a virgin birth. For the whole point of the virgin-birth story was that Joseph was *not* the father of Jesus. In fact, Joseph was not even married to Mary at the time of her conception – they were only “betrothed”. This was a feature required by the virgin-birth stories, for no one would have accepted that Mary had still been a virgin had they already been married.

Although the genealogies sit awkwardly alongside stories of the virgin birth, the tracing of Jesus' ancestry to David was too important for Luke and Matthew to omit. Caught between necessity and contradiction, Luke found it necessary to add a parenthetical “as was supposed”, qualifying Joseph as the father of Jesus:

And Jesus ... being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, who was the son of Heli ... *etc.*

Luke 3:23; cf. KJV

The more literal Matthew, on the other hand, as in the instance of Jesus' brothers and sisters, lets his genealogy and virgin-birth story remain in contradiction, standing unqualified alongside each other.

The importance of Jesus' ancestry stems from the Jewish belief that the messiah would be born into the 'house of David'. All four of the gospel writers mention the fact – John once and the synoptics on many occasions, Jesus often being referred to as the “Son of David”.¹⁵ Additionally, Luke's angel says to Mary:

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end.

Luke 1:32; cf. JB, KJV

Similarly, Matthew's angel pointedly speaks of Joseph as the "son of David",¹⁶ while Luke has Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, say:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel;
 for he has visited and redeemed his people,
 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
 in the house of his servant David;
 As he has spoken by the mouth of his holy prophets,
 which have been since the world began.

Luke 1:68–70; cf. KJV

It was of great importance to the early Christians to prove that Jesus was the promised messiah, from the 'house of David'. It is probable, however, that the true meaning of this belief, if relevant, is not physical, but spiritual. David's son Solomon, the first in the 'house of David', is described in *1 Kings*, as the greatest among wise men:

Yahweh gave Solomon immense wisdom and understanding,
 and a heart as vast as the sand on the seashore.
 The wisdom of Solomon surpassed the wisdom
 of the sons of the East, and all the wisdom of Egypt.
 He was wiser than any other, . . .
 he composed three thousand proverbs,
 and his songs numbered a thousand and five. . . .
 Men from all nations came to hear Solomon's wisdom.

1 Kings 4:29–32, JB

Solomon's understanding is compared to the wisdom of Egypt and the East, traditionally the ancient repositories of mystic lore. That is, his wisdom was that of a mystic; and being born in the 'house of' David or Solomon actually refers to the spiritual successorship or lineage of the true prophets or masters. The messiah or christ was the 'anointed one', the one who was sealed or appointed by God to act as a saviour or spiritual master. And since the lineage of such a master is spiritual, from master to successor, in this sense, all masters, messiahs or christes, come from the same 'family' – but spiritually, not physically. Matthew and Luke were thus mistaken in thinking that they had to trace Jesus' real parentage to King David.

After all, if you do the mathematics, within only 15 or 20 generations everyone can trace their ancestry to practically anyone they choose. If each father

had three children, then after 15 generations the original ancestor would have a little more than 43 million descendants. The subsequent generation would produce 130 million descendants, the one after that 390 million – and so on. No wonder the author of *1 Timothy*, even if the letter was a fraud, counselled:

Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies.

1 Timothy 1:4, KJV

Among these “fables” may well have been stories of a virgin birth.

Who Believed in the Virgin Birth?

Except for the two stories in *Luke* and *Matthew*, the doctrine of the virgin birth is absent from the New Testament. Moreover, many early Christians rejected the idea. The Ebionites, the earliest Judaic Christians living in Palestine and closest to the scene of the original events, certainly repudiated it. Epiphanius reports of them:

They say that Jesus was begotten of the seed of a man, and was chosen; and so by the choice of God he was called the Son of God after the Christ that had come to him from on high in the likeness of a dove. And they deny that he was begotten of God the Father.

Epiphanius, Panarion 30:16.2; cf. ANT p.10, PES p.132

Likewise, the unknown author of the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* wrote of the

Ebionites who will have the Son of God to be a mere man, begotten by human pleasure and the conjunction of Joseph and Mary.

Constitutions of the Holy Apostles 6:6, CHA p.149

To a Jew, the idea of God fathering a child on a human mother would have been abhorrent and it is not surprising that it failed to catch on among the Judaic Christians. The belief in such divine intervention was primarily one that would have appealed to non-Jews, especially those influenced by Greek culture, where Zeus and the other gods were famed for their sexual exploits with human women, frequently fathering children. In fact, some of the bucolic scenes in the *Protoevangelium of James* are clearly Christian propaganda aimed at giving Jesus a prominent place among the heroes and gods of Greek tradition.

Many of the Syrian Christians, as well as the writer of the *Acts of Thomas*, must also have rejected the idea, especially in the early centuries, for it is implicit in their belief that Judas Thomas was not only Jesus’ brother, but his *twin* brother, too. For them, ‘Didymos Judas Thomas’ was the one who founded the churches in the East, especially in Edessa; and later tradition – as

in the *Acts of Thomas* – has him travelling to India. In fact, the Greek *didymos* is a phonetic rendering of the Aramaic *te'oma*, which means 'twin'. He was thus 'Judas the Twin', corresponding to Judas in Mark's list of Jesus' brothers.

A great many of the more gnostically inclined gave no credence to the story of the virgin birth. The author of the Nag Hammadi *Gospel of Philip* is unequivocal:

Some said, "Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit."

They are in error. They do not know what they are saying.

Gospel of Philip 55, NHS20 pp.150–51

Irenaeus speaks of the gnostic teacher, Cerinthus, as having taught an ordinary birth for Jesus. In his *Against Heresies*, he writes:

Cerinthus, again, a man who was educated in the wisdom of the Egyptians ... represented Jesus as having not been born of a virgin, but as being the son of Joseph and Mary according to the ordinary course of human generation, while he nevertheless was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men.

Irenaeus, Against Heresies I:26, AH1 p.97

Hippolytus likewise says that the gnostic Elchasai, from whom a number of sects came into being, lasting until the fifth century and mostly associated with the Judaic side of Christianity, taught the same. According to Hippolytus, Elchasai also said that Jesus was a soul who had come to this world in the past (presumably as a saviour) and would go on incarnating here in the future – one of a number of indications of a belief in reincarnation in early Christianity:

He (Elchasai) asserts that Christ was born a man in the same manner common to all and that he was not for the first time (on earth) ... but that both previously and frequently again, he had been born and would be born: would thus appear and exist undergoing alterations of birth and having his soul transferred from body to body.

Hippolytus, Refutation of All Heresies IX:9; cf. RAH p.347

Hippolytus also writes of the gnostics Carpocratēs¹⁷ and Apellēs¹⁸ as dissidents on the matter of the virgin birth. In fact, it is to be expected that many of the gnostically oriented would have repudiated the belief since they represented the esoteric stream of Christianity and as such were more interested in the inward aspects of Jesus' teachings than externals. Certainly, the evidence is that there were more than a few who rejected the idea, for Irenaeus, Hippolytus and the other heresiologists devote a considerable amount of effort to refuting the 'heretics' and their followers, and arguing the validity of their own point of view.

The mystic Mānī also rejected the virgin birth, though ironically, in the manner of the legends that gather around mystics after their death, the later Manichaeans of China said that Mānī's mother had given birth to him out of her chest. In fact, Jesus was not alone in being credited with a virgin birth. The gnostic Simon Magus was so acclaimed, as was Zarathushtra, while Apollonius of Tyana, a Greek mystic and contemporary of Jesus who became well known in the Roman world, was said to have been the son of the Greek sea god, Proteus, who was credited with the ability to change his shape at will. Proteus, says the legend, appeared to the mother of Apollonius in the form of an Egyptian demon, just before the sage was born;¹⁹ and unlike Mary, so the story goes, she was not in the least afraid of the apparition.

Throughout history, legends of a miraculous birth have been consistently woven around the lives of the great. In the ancient Middle Eastern world, it was a common claim that many of their warriors and heroes – mythical or historical – had been the offspring of a deity. According to legend, the mythical Dionysius, Perseus, Ra and Atys had all been born of the union of a god and a virgin. It was said of the deity Mithras that at the beginning of time before the earth was populated, some shepherds observed the young and naked Mithras emerging from a rock as the sun arose, carrying a flaming torch in one hand, a knife in the other, and wearing a Phrygian cap. Understandably, the shepherds worshipped him, testifying that, on account of the cold, he climbed into a tree and made himself a garment of fig leaves. There are legends that the Buddha was born from an opening in his mother's side, and that the Indian mystic Kabīr (c. 1398–1518) was either divinely conceived or born from a blister on his mother's hand.²⁰

Emperors such as the powerful Julius Caesar (100–44 BCE) and Augustus (63 BCE–14 CE) were also reported to have been the sons of a deity who became their champions during life, thus accounting for their power and conquests. Augustus claimed Apollo as his father, for his mother, while sleeping in the Temple of Apollo, had yielded to the embrace of a serpent which left permanent marks upon her body. Ten months later, Augustus was born.

The myths concerning the births of Mānī and the Buddha provides an insight into why such legends come into existence. They stem from the fact that human beings are often utterly confused, embarrassed, and obsessed by sex. Otherwise, what is so wrong about a master taking birth in the normal human way? Their bodily existence is natural in every other respect, and there is nothing wrong with sex other than what is made of it in thought and action. Jesus himself frequently speaks of being the "Son of Man" as well as the "Son of God". So if he claimed to be the "Son of Man", then that surely suggests that a man had been involved. Indeed, if he could avoid the father – why need he have selected a mother? If he was going to do things in a miraculous way, then why should he not have simply descended from the skies as an adult, ready to begin his ministry, complete with any knowledge of

this world he might have needed? Why choose the one means of miraculous entry that would have been the most difficult to prove?

Again, one of the reasons why a master takes human birth and lives like other human beings is to be a living example of all he teaches. But if at the very outset he arrives by way of a miracle, how could he then be a living example of perfect humanity? He would have already demonstrated that he was not genuinely human at all and hence not a valid exemplar for human beings.

The Mystic Mother and the Virginal Spirit

From a mystic point of view, this is really the heart of the matter and it is probable that most of those of a gnostic or mystic disposition discounted all stories of the virgin birth. Mystics are realists and pragmatists in a way that the materially minded may find hard to understand. Moreover, there is a mystical element enfolded in the myth of the virgin birth which may prove to be the origin of what later became misinterpreted and externalized. The real, spiritual and mystic ‘mother’ of Jesus or any perfect mystic is the pure and unsullied Holy Spirit.

In Semitic languages, all objects and things – all nouns – have a gender. This may be a difficult concept to grasp for those who speak only English, yet it is a common feature of many languages. In such languages, the gender is significant and it seems very odd when mistakes are made. Now, the Hebrew and Aramaic words for the Holy Spirit and the creative Wisdom of God are feminine. God, on the other hand, is masculine. For this reason, God is known as the Father while His creative power, that which gives birth to the entire creation, is called the Mother of all things. She is also, metaphorically speaking, pure and virginal, for she gives birth without any intermediary. She has the innate purity of God. In the West, there is the similar notion of ‘Mother Nature’, the creative and organizing power behind the natural world.

A master is the personified form of this great power. A Son of God – as the “Word made flesh” – is hence born of the pure and virginal Mother or Holy Spirit, through the will of the Father. So Jesus, truly, was born of a virgin – but not a virgin of this world. This provides yet another possible origin for the story of Jesus’ miraculous birth.

Many of the gnostics and others of Jesus’ time used such expressions in their descriptions of creation. According to both Jerome and Origen, for instance, Jesus refers to “my Mother the Holy Spirit”²¹ in the *Gospel of the Hebrews*.

Similarly, a story found in a Coptic text relates that the late fourth-century archbishop, Cyril of Jerusalem (*d.*387), once sent for a monk of Maioma in Gaza who was teaching that the Virgin Mary was actually a “power”. Called to give an account of his heretical belief, the monk replied:

“It is written in the *Gospel to the Hebrews* that when Christ wished to come upon the earth to men, the good Father called a mighty Power in the heavens, which was called Michael, and committed Christ to

the care thereof. And the Power came down into the world and it was called Mary, and he was in her womb seven months. . . .”

The archbishop (Cyril) answered and said: “Where in the four gospels is it said that the holy Virgin Mary, the mother of God, is a ‘force’?”

And the monk answered and said: “In the *Gospel to the Hebrews*.”

And Apa Cyril answered and said, “Then according to what you say, there are five gospels? . . . Whose is the fifth gospel?”

And that monk said unto him: “It is the gospel that was written to the Hebrews.”

Discourse on Mary Theotokos, MCT pp.59–61 (fol.12a–13a); cf. MCT pp.637–38

According to the story, Cyril then convinced him of his error, the monk repented, and Cyril burned the books. Whether or not the incident is fictitious, and whether the *Gospel to the Hebrews* mentioned is the same as that from which Jerome and Origen quote is less than certain. All the same, it demonstrates the understanding that some early Christians had of the nature of the virgin mother, this account, of course, being set in a mythological form.

Like the Holy Spirit, Wisdom was also commonly called the Mother, as in the *Clementine Recognitions* where the creative power is described as “Wisdom, the Mother of all things”.²² In fact, the term ‘Mother’ was used in a number of mystic and gnostic contexts as an epithet applied to both the supreme Lord and His creative power, as well as lesser powers, too. Just as a child ‘emanates’ from a human mother, so do the realms and powers of creation emanate from that which is higher. In the *Teachings of Silvanus*, the “Mother” is “Wisdom”, the creative power:

Return, my son, to your first Father, God, and Wisdom your Mother,
from whom you came into being in the very beginning.

Teachings of Silvanus 91; cf. TS pp.26–27

The same writer also speaks of the creative power as the “Hand of the Father” which “forms everything” and is also called the “Christ” and the “Mother of everything”:

Only the Hand of the Lord has created all these things. For this Hand
of the Father is Christ, and it forms everything. Through it, everything
has come into being since it became the Mother of everything.

Teachings of Silvanus 115, TS pp.74–75

In the *Untitled Text* of the gnostic *Bruce Codex*, the “Mother” is the supreme, unknowable One who dwells in the “twelfth deep”, the highest ‘region’ of this descriptive system. And demonstrating how gender was completely flexible in the hands of the poet and bore no actual relationship to the mystic reality, *she* is also the “eternal” and “ineffable” *Father!* –

The twelfth deep . . . is the Truth
 from which has come all truth.
 This is the Truth that contains them all.
 This is the Image of the Father.
 This is the mirror of the All (the creation).
 This is the Mother of all the aeons.
 It is this that surrounds all the deeps.
 This is the *Monad* (the One)
 that is unknowable or is unknown. . . .
 This is the eternal Father.
 This is the ineffable Father:
 not understood, unthinkable, inaccessible.

Untitled Text 229:2; cf. BC pp.220–21

But in the same tractate, the “Mother” is also the “Creative Word” who is the “Lord, and saviour, and Christ”:

This Creative Word became a Power of God,
 and Lord, and saviour, and Christ,
 and King, and Good, and Father, and Mother.

Untitled Text 248:11, BC pp.258–59

In another passage, it is said that from this “Mother” arises “her firstborn Son” – the saviour – who is given the means to travel throughout the entire creation, taking on forms appropriate to whatever region he happens to be in:

Afterwards the Mother established her firstborn Son.
 She gave to him the authority of the sonship.
 And she gave to him hosts of angels and archangels.
 And she gave to him twelve powers to serve him.
 And she gave to him a garment in which to accomplish all things.
 And in it were all bodies:
 the body of fire, and the body of air,
 and the body of earth, and the body of wind,
 and the body of angels, and the body of archangels,
 and the body of powers, and the body of mighty ones,
 and the body of gods, and the body of lords.
 In a word, within it were all bodies,
 so that none should hinder him
 from going to the Height or from going down to the abyss.

Untitled Text 256–57:16, BC pp.274–77

The bodies of “fire”, “air” and “earth” are probably the astral, causal and physical bodies of modern terminology, while the rest are an attempt to

express in human words the power of the “Son” to manifest in any part of the creation. In this world, the Son is the “Word made flesh” because flesh is what bodies are made of in the material realm. In the higher worlds, he takes on a form appropriate to wherever he happens to be. In truth, he can manifest in all places at once, as does the Creative Word or Mother who is the essence and real form of the Son.

A common appellation of the Mother was also the Virgin. Perhaps this is the origin of the Roman Catholic doctrine of Mary’s immaculate conception, that she was born without any stain of original sin, for the Holy Spirit or Mother is also ‘born’ purely from God, the one Source of all. The belief seems to have had its origins in the seventh century, being based on the writings of earlier fathers such as Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who depicted Jesus as the ‘new Adam’ and Mary as the ‘new Eve’, the father and mother of mankind.

Imagery based upon family relationships and allied themes was common in Judaic and early Christian literature, where it often contained a mystical symbolism. In gnostic writings both the Creator and the creative power, as well as other powers in the creative hierarchy, were known by epithets such as the “Virginal Spirit”, the “Virgin of the Light” and so on. *Zostrianos*, for example, speaks of the “Virgin Light”.²³ The *Second Book of Jeu* describes the “baptism of fire” that is given by the “Virgin of the Light”.²⁴ *On the Origin of the World* speaks of the “Virgin of the Holy Spirit”.²⁵ In the *Pistis Sophia*, the “Virgin of the Light”²⁶ is the power responsible for overseeing the rebirth of souls according to their deeds. In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the Creator is described by such expressions as the “great, invisible, incomprehensible Virginal Spirit”.²⁷ And the *Apocryphon of John* describes the supreme Lord as the “invisible, Virginal Spirit who is perfect”²⁸ from whom the “*Pronoia*”, the “thinking” or Primal Thought, proceeds as the creative power.

Such terms are also very common in the Manichaean texts, where scholars have tended to use the term ‘Maiden’ rather than ‘Virgin’ in their translations, though it comes to the same thing. Like the gnostics, these writings characteristically speak of the Holy Spirit as the “glorious Maiden of Light”,²⁹ the “Mother, the Maiden of all that lives”,³⁰ the “Mother of the beings of Light”,³¹ and by other similar expressions. For instance:

The Maiden of Light is the Holy Spirit.

Manichaean Psalm Book, MPB p.116

And, like the *Logos*, she is also the “Likeness” or Image of the Divine:

Lo, the Light of the Maiden has shone forth on me,
the glorious Likeness.

Manichaean Psalm Book CCLXIV, MPB p.81

In the Mandaean writings, the term “Mother” is again used with a variety of meanings. She is the source of all things earthly that draws souls to this world; but she is also the creative power of the supreme “Father of Greatness”, the “Wellspring of the mysteries”,³² the “Wellspring, my Mother from whom I derive (my) being”³³ and

the Treasure of Life, Mother of all worlds,
she from whom the upper, middle
and lower worlds emanated. . . .
Her name is *Naširutha* (mystic Truth).

Thousand and Twelve Questions I:5, TTQ p.111

There is no doubt, therefore, that terms such as “Virgin” and “Mother” were used in specifically mystical contexts, though the precise meaning of the terms could vary to some extent. It is also certain that Jesus and his disciples would have been quite familiar with this kind of terminology, and that some of them, if not Jesus himself, must have used it in their explanation of the mystic teachings. So, following a well-trodden pathway of descent, it can be readily imagined how – somewhere along the line – the description of a mystic truth became literalized as a physical virgin-birth story.³⁴

See also: **immaculate conception, miracles of Jesus and the apostles (7.3), Mother (3.1).**

1. *Matthew* 1:25.
2. *Mark* 3:31–35.
3. *Matthew* 12:46; *Luke* 8:19.
4. *Isaiah* 7:14.
5. *Matthew* 13:55–56.
6. *Luke* 2:7, *KJV*.
7. *Acts* 1:14.
8. *John* 7:5, *KJV*.
9. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20:9.1.
10. *Matthew* 1:18; cf. *KJV*.
11. *Protoevangelium of James*, *NTA1* pp.370–88.
12. *Death of Joseph II*, *CAG* p.131.
13. E.g. Epiphanius, *Panarion* 78:8.1, 9.6.
14. E.g. Epiphanius, *Ancoratus* 60:1.
15. *Mark* 10:47, 48, 11:10, 12:35ff.; *Matthew* 9:27, 12:23, 15:22, 20:30, 31, 21:9, 15, 22:42ff.; *Luke* 18:38, 39, 20:41ff.; *John* 7:42.
16. *Matthew* 1:20, *KJV*.
17. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VII:20, *RAH* p.300.
18. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* VII:26, *RAH* p.306.

19. Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* 1:4, *LATPI* pp.10–13.
20. See V.K. Sethi, *Kabir, KWGN* p.5.
21. *Gospel of the Hebrews*, in Origen: *Commentary on John* 2:12.87 (on John 1:3); cf. *OG* p.85.
22. *Clementine Recognitions* II:12, *CH* p.199.
23. Zostrianos 129, *NHS3I* pp.218–19.
24. *Second Book of Jeu* 110:46, *BC* pp.148–49.
25. *Origin of the World* 105, *NHS2I* pp.44–45.
26. *Pistis Sophia*, *PS* and *PSGG*, *passim*.
27. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 56, *NHS4* p.75, *passim*.
28. *Apocryphon of John* 4, *NHS33* p.33, *passim*.
29. *Manichaean Psalm Book* CCXXXVII, *MPB* p.37.
30. *Manichaean Psalm Book*; cf. *MPB* p.145.
31. *Manichaean Hymns*, *Angad Rōshnān* VI:69, *MHCP* pp.152–53.
32. *Alma Rishaia Rba* 7:419, *PNC* p.31.
33. *Thousand and Twelve Questions* I:21; cf. *TTQ* p.118.
34. Material drawn from John Davidson, *The Gospel of Jesus*, *GJ* pp.651–67.

Virgin Mary See **virgin birth**.

virgin mother See **virgin birth**.

vrata (S), **brat** (H), **barat** (Pu) *Lit.* vow, promise, resolve, pledge; a rule of conduct; a religious or spiritual observance; a voluntary observance, usually renouncing something; an act of austerity or solemn vow, such as to fast, to be celibate, to read sacred books, to go on pilgrimages, to perform some meritorious deed, and so on; sometimes performed with the intention of invoking the help of a deity for the fulfilment of some particular desire; colloquially, often refers to fasting in particular.

Vrata commonly appears in terms for specific vows, which may also have become the name of a particular ceremony at which the vow is formally taken. The *shirovrata* (head vow), for example – which is described in the *Atharva Veda*¹ and mentioned in the *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*,² and is said by Shankara to entail carrying fire on the head³ – has been interpreted⁴ to refer to the vow of *sannyāsa* (renunciation), when the head is shaved and the individual vows to renounce the world and become a *sannyāsin*. This vow is traditionally undertaken in the fourth stage (*āshrama*) of Hindu life, with the intention of finding God, when all responsibilities to the world have been discharged. Those who wish to dedicate their lives to the spiritual quest may take the vow at an earlier age.

Other common vows include *chāndrāyaṇa-vrata*, which is a fast regulated by the moon (*chandra*), extending over one lunar cycle, in which the quantity of food taken is regulated according to the waxing and waning of the moon; *ekādashī-vrata* (vow of the eleventh), which entails fasting on the eleventh day of a fortnight in a lunar month; *kṛichchhra-vrata* (vow of pain), a vow to undertake difficult austerities; and *mahāvratā* (great vow, great duty, great festival), an ancient and complex Vedic ceremony.

Vrata also refers more generally to firm intention and resolve:

Good men, in whom there is no sin (*pāpa*),
freed from the delusion (*moha*)
of the pairs of opposites (*dvandva*),
adore me with firm resolve (*dṛiḍha-vrata*). . .

Vigorous and of firm resolve (*dṛiḍha-vrata*),
these devotees, ever in union, meditate (*upāsita*) on Me,
always singing My glory and bowing before Me.

Bhagavad Gītā 7:28, 9:14

In keeping with the systematized character of Jain philosophy, Jainism puts significant emphasis on a large number of vows. Five *mahāvratas* (*pañcha-mahāvratas* or *pañcha-vratas*) comprise a mendicant monk's vow of adherence to the five basic principles of *ahiṃsā* (non-violence), *satya* (truth), *asteya* (not stealing, taking only what is given), *brahmacharya* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (non-possession, non-attachment). These vows are taken at the time of initiation (*dīkshā*) as a monk.

For laypeople, twelve major vows are listed. There are five lesser vows (*aṇuvratas*), which are the same as the mendicant *mahāvratas* but are followed in a less restrictive manner; three supplementary vows (*guṇa-vratas*), whose intention is to further limit one's activities, thereby reducing the opportunities to cause harm; and four vows of religious discipline (*śikshā-vratas*), which entail vowing to engage regularly in both particular rites and spiritual practice. The *guṇa-vratas* and *śikshā-vratas* together are known as *śīla-vratas* (virtuous conduct vows), generally understood as supplementary vows whose purpose is to assist in and extend observance of the *aṇuvratas*.

These vows for mendicants and laypeople are described in the Jain text, the *Tattvārtha Sūtra* (c. C2nd BCE), along with a description of five kinds of transgression regarding each of the vows.⁵ The same vows are again detailed in other texts such as the *Ashṭapāhuḍa*, *Purushārtha*, and *Samansuttam*.⁶

See also: **chandravrata**, **ekādashī**, **sāmāyika** (8.5), **tapas**, **vrata** (►4).

1. *Atharva Veda Parishishṭa* 46:1.7.
2. *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:2.10.
3. Shankara, on *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:2.10, in *MUSS* p.78 (n.1).
4. Swami Shivananda, *Principal Upanishads*, *PUSS* pp.237–39, 369.
5. *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7.
6. *Ashṭapāhuḍa* 2:23ff.; *Purushārtha* 130ff.; *Samansuttam* 22:300, 23:1ff.

wàidào (C) *Lit.* outside (*wài*) ways (*dào*); deviant ways, heterodoxies, heresies; in Daoism and Buddhism, non-Daoist or non-Buddhist beliefs and practices. The Daoist *Yóulóng zhuàn* ('Biography of the One Who Seems Like a Dragon', C11th) lists ninety-six deviant practices, many of which are ascetic practices of ancient India. A similar list appears in the *Lǎojūn bāshíyī huà túshuō* ('Illustrated Explanations of the Eighty-One Transformations of Lord Lǎo', C13th).¹

See also: **pángmén**.

1. See Louis Komjathy, *Cultivating Perfection*, *CPMS* p.306 (n.83).

waitapu (Mo) *Lit.* sacred (*tapu*) water (*wai*); natural fresh spring water dedicated to *Io* the Most Supreme by means of prayers and incantations (*karakia*); sacred or holy water used in cleansing, rituals, ceremonies, baptisms, *etc.*

Outdoor sacred sites (*tūāhu*), shrines, ceremonial places and altars (*ahurewa*, *ahu*) are situated near natural fresh water springs, which are reserved as *waitapu* or sacred water. Before performing any rite or ceremony, it is necessary to perform ritual cleansing of the body, especially the hands, ankles, knees, elbows, shoulders and face, in order to be both physically and energetically clean before communing with the *atua* or gods. "This is done by washing in water. Prayers are said at this stage ... asking for purity and forgiveness. After asking to be set on the right path, the water (to be used in the ritual) needs to be made holy."¹

See also: **tapu**.

1. Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga*, *TRAK* pp.185–86.

wanagi wachipi *Lit.* spirit (*wanagi*) dance (*wachipi*); ghost dance. See **ghost dance**.

wathan (A) (pl. *wuthun*, *awthān*) *Lit.* idol. See **but**.

wazīfah (A/P) *Lit.* pension; also, one's daily task; in a religious context, daily worship. Al-Ghazālī advises:

The daily routine of worship (*wazīfah*) varies with every individual. Circumambulations profit some, telling of beads suits others, while reading the *Qur'ān* is loved by others. So let the novice elect for himself the spiritual exercise that most appeals to his heart, and take to it. If after following one practice he feels tired, let him change to another. It is natural to get tired performing one exercise for a long time.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn 1:10; cf. RRS p.32

Wazīfah is also the name of a Sufi spiritual exercise, which Indian Sufi, 'Ināyat Khān, equates with the repetition of a *mantra*:

As Zīb al-Nisā' says, "Say continually that sacred name which will make thee sacred." The Hindus have called it *mantra yoga*; the Sufis have termed it *wazīfah*. It is the power of the word, which works upon each atom of the body, making it sonorous, making it a medium of communication between the external life and the inner life.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK2 p.133

whakanoa (Mo) *Lit.* to cause (*whaka*) + common (*noa*); to make or cause something to be common; to free something or someone from the restrictions of *tapu* (sacred, restricted). See **noa**, **tapu**.

whakapāhunu (Mo) *Lit.* to cause (*whaka*) to burn (*pāhunu*), to cause anxiety; hence, to discourage; a Māori magic ritual "practised in order to awaken a person's conscience, to render him mentally uneasy, and so lead to his mending his ways".¹ See **kā mahunu**.

1. Elsdon Best, *Maori Religion and Mythology*, MRM2 p.104.

whakapakoko rākau, **pou whakapakoko** (Mo) *Lit.* stick (*rākau*) + carved image (*whakapakoko*); peg (*pou*) + carved image; a godstick; a wooden stick with a carved top, used for incantations; a statue or representation of an *atua* (ancestor deity) into which the *atua* was induced to enter; a special stick about thirty centimetres long with a carved head at the top representing intelligence;

may be of simple or intricate design; used by the *tohunga* (priestly adept) to communicate with and seek the assistance of the *atua*; often abbreviated to just *whakapakoko*.

By means of a *whakatoro* or godstick ceremony, the *whakapakoko* is used to invoke or bind an *atua* to appear before the *tohunga* when the *atua*'s direct assistance is needed. Richard Taylor (1805–1884) provides what must be one of the earliest written descriptions:

The Māori could scarcely be said to be idolaters. Although they certainly had idols, yet they were not generally worshipped, but only used by the priests as adjuncts to their *karakia* (invocations, *etc.*). The *whakapakoko*, or images, thus used were little more than wooden pegs with a distorted figure of the human head carved on the top; these were about eighteen inches long; the other end was pointed so that they could be stuck in the ground. . . . These images were only thought to possess virtue or peculiar sanctity from the presences of the gods they represented when dressed up for worship; at other times they were regarded only as bits of ordinary wood.

This dressing consisted in the first place of the *pāhau*, or beard, which was made by a fringe of the bright-red feathers of the *kaka* parrot, next to the peculiar cincture of sacred cord with which it was bound. This mystic bandage was not only tied on in a peculiar way by the priest, who uttered his most powerful spells all the time he was doing it, but also whilst he was twisting the cord itself; and, lastly, painting the entire figure with the sacred *kura* (red). This completed the preparation for the reception of the god, who was by these means constrained to come and take up his abode in it when invoked.

Richard Taylor, Te Ika a Maui, IMNZ pp.211–12

The New Zealand ethnographer Elsdon Best (1856–1931) provides a basic description:

The carved pegs or staves employed as temporary abiding places for spirit gods during placatory, invocatory and divinatory rites are sometimes called by us ‘godsticks’. . . . They were termed *tiki* (carved figure) by some, and this name is applied in a general sense to figures fashioned in human form, not only in these isles, but also in Polynesia. In White’s notes they are called either *tiki* or *tiki wānanga*, the last word having reference to their use in sacerdotal (priestly) matters. One native gave the name of *atua kiato* (godsticks) for them, but no corroboration of this has been received. The cenotaphs carved in human form were styled *tiki*, but similar figures on a house gable, or the posts of a stockade, were called *tekoteko*. Taylor speaks of them

as *whakapakoko*, a term used to denote images used for different purposes. Williams gives *whakapakoko rākau*, or *pou whakapakoko*, as “a post with a carved top, used for purposes of incantation”.¹ I am inclined to think that *pou* is here applied to these peg-like objects, and not to a larger one that might be termed a post. . . .

I certainly would not apply the term ‘idol’ to these mediumistic figures. They were in no way worshipped, but merely used as temporary ‘shrines’ while a ceremony was being performed. At no other time were they used or resorted to.

Elsdon Best, Maori Religion and Mythology, MRM1 pp.250–51

Best’s primary source of information came from the Tūhoe tribe (*iwi*) of the eastern North Island. A more recent description is given by the contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand’s South Island:

A *whakapakoko* or godstick is carved, usually from wood, as a dwelling place for an *atua*. . . . To the best of my knowledge, until he taught me, my grandfather was the only person to continue to make and use godsticks. . . .

The *tohunga* communicated with the various gods by employing a special stick called the *whakapakoko*. This is a statue representing an *atua* and the spirit of an *atua* can manifest into its material body. Some were offered to gods as resting places while others actively called the *atua* into manifestation for important matters. *Tohunga* of every class used the *whakapakoko*; its use was introduced to me in the *poutoru* stage (the third stage of *tohunga* training).

To the modern Western mind, the art of god-making, or the work of placing a god into a statue, is an extinct practice long lost to another era. However, in New Zealand, the *tohunga* still calls his *atua* into carved statues so the practice still survives. The *whakapakoko* and *taumata-atua*, otherwise called ‘godsticks’, are still in use today among a few people like my grandfather. I was a boy when he made one for *Rongo*, the god of cultivated crops. It was a simple stick with a bird-like head. He placed it into the vegetable garden so that *Rongo* would rest in its form and share his fertility inside the soil. Fertility was the most traditional reason for making a *whakapakoko*, and my grandfather is the only one I know who performed it until passing the art to me.

Two distinct forms of the godstick can be seen. They are the *taumata-atua* and *whakapakoko*, though other people may have different interpretations of their separate functions. Examples of both are found in New Zealand museums, but only some thirty or so have survived from the last five hundred years. They are rarely found

because they were such *tapu* (sacred, restricted) objects and indeed few people knew how to use them.

A *taumata-atua* generally came in the form of a rock image. It had a full body and was rounder in shape. Some were made from bone and occasionally wood. The proper function of the *taumata-atua* lay in the meaning of its name, which means ‘resting place for a god’. We use the *taumata-atua* as a token of giving so that the *atua* may come and rest while residing in its matter. This form of godstick is passive and is used to make offerings to an *atua* by placing them before the image. The *taumata-atua* is used more for worship than the second kind. The force or *mana* of the *atua* comes into contact with its immediate surroundings, being the worshippers and the land.

The *whakapakoko*, sometimes named *wakapakoko* in the South Island, is an entirely different object. It is still used for praise like the *taumata-atua*, but can be used for much more in the hands of an expert *tohunga*. The *whakapakoko* are usually made from wood lengths, usually about thirty centimetres (twelve inches) or so long, with only the head figure carved on top of the stick, representing intelligence. It differs from *taumata-atua* chiefly in its function. The *whakapakoko* is used to invoke an *atua* to become present before the *tohunga*. The invocations are made when we need direct assistance from an *atua* as compared to the *taumata-atua* being used to give thanks and prayers. In the *taumata-atua*, the *atua* comes and goes as it pleases whereas in the *whakapakoko* the *tohunga* seeks to bind or invoke an *atua* to its form for some time to commune with the *atua*. This godstick is more active in nature and the *tohunga* is able to communicate with the *wairua* or spirit of the *atua* via special procedures. Here the *tohunga* has a full two-way relationship with the *atua* present in that the god can now also speak to us....

Until now no real distinction has been made between the *taumata-atua* and the *whakapakoko*. Other works simply call both images idols and godsticks without recognizing their distinct functions. What really separates the *whakapakoko* from the *taumata-atua* is that the *whakapakoko* is active while the other form is passive. Another noted difference is in the way we use both forms. The *whakapakoko* is held in a certain way during an invocation and then its stick base is thrust into the ground, whereas the *taumata-atua* can be seen as an object that rests wholly above the ground.

The *taumata-atua* is a resting place for an *atua*. Offerings are made to it in a bowl or basket with clean rocks placed in its base where items of food rest. Prayers can also be said to it because it becomes a permanent shrine or place of worship to the *atua*. To use the *whakapakoko*, on the other hand, the *tohunga* carries out certain procedures to invoke the *atua* for important reasons. Such rituals were called *whakatoro* by Kāi Tahu (tribe).

The Māori of my tribe once invoked *Kahukura*, the rainbow war god, through the *whakapakoko* for matters pertaining to protection, securing good weather and war. He was the main *atua* of the South Island and was consulted in many matters in the *whakatoro* ceremony. This ceremony was brought with the people on the Tākitimu canoe and was carried down south when Kāi Tahu brought the rainbow *atua* to Kaiapoi.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.153, 166–67

Robinson then goes on to describe the *whakatoro* ceremony at some length.

See also: **pātai-atua**, **prayersticks**, **tohunga** (7.1), **tokotauwaka**, **whakatoro**.

1. See “whakapakoko rakau,” *Dictionary of the Maori Language, DMLW*.

whakatoro (Mo) *Lit.* to extend, to stretch out; a ceremony invoking the gods (*atua*) by means of a *whakapakoko* (godstick) which includes clasping the hands together and ‘stretching out’ as a gesture of invocation for the assistance and blessings of the *atua*; a generic term for a number of such ceremonies, each having its own particular function.

Whakatoro could be performed as elaborate public ceremonies, such as the *pātai-atua* (consultation with a god), or as simple personal ceremonies. They could be very basic, such as placing a *whakapakoko* (godstick) in the garden while saying prayers for a good crop to the god *Rongo* (*atua* of agriculture). The contemporary writer Samuel Timoti Robinson observes that the power of such ceremonies lies in the mind and the faith of the individual, not in the stick or the ritual *per se*.¹

See also: **pātai-atua**, **whakapakoko rākau**.

1. Samuel Timoti Robinson, *Tohunga, TRAK* p.179.

whata-ata (Mo) *Lit.* mirror, reflection; the use of a bowl of still water as an aid to concentrating the mind in order to see clairvoyantly.

The meaning and use of the term is explained by Samuel Timoti Robinson of the Kāi Tahu, the principal tribe of New Zealand’s South Island:

The first *raurau* (divination) ceremony is called *whata-ata* and it develops the spiritual sight of the *akoako* (student *tohunga*). It was done over a pool of water and the student was instructed to sit down and meditate so that the mind became free from the body. The old Polynesians used a bowl of water for the training. In essence, the water

served as a spiritual window to the things unknown. The *tohunga* merely gazed into the pool of water and knew many things.

Pōua Tāre Tikao (Robinson's great-great uncle, and the last recognized *tohunga* of their tribe) gave an example of where the *tohunga* might use such a method. He said that to overcome a *tohunga* one would place the wizard's own dung onto his walking stick so that, when the *tohunga* returned and found the dirtied *toko*, he would at once curse the person to whom the filth belonged. Later when the *tohunga* went to his pool of water to see who committed the act, he would only be encountered by his own reflection. The *tohunga* would at once realize that the filth was his own and that he had in fact cursed himself, and soon the *tohunga* would die. In this instance, the objective of the pool in visionary work was to catch a criminal. In other instances, it was also used to find out who had broken *tapu* or placed a *mākutu* on another person.

The pool of water can be used for many other things. Pōua Tāre called it a *whata-ata*, which means 'mirror' or 'reflection', and my teacher said that was also the name of the ritual. The pool of water is essentially a doorway to the spiritual realm and the *tohunga* is able to see into the future or the underworld with it. The bowl of water becomes a mini-universe and the water becomes the realm of the unknown.

The bowl is entirely symbolic. Māori thought that the world was flat and that all water was kept in by a vast sandbank that encircled the earth around its sides. This was the old *tohunga* notion of why a bowl of water was used to represent the world. The water within is also the vast ocean of *Hine-moana*, the Ocean Maid. Her house serves as the doorway to the heavens. It lies to the east where the sky meets the sea. As such, the *tohunga* seeks it out to gain entry to the hidden and knows the secrets of the whole world.

Samuel Timoti Robinson, Tohunga, TRAK pp.192–93

Robinson adds that the bowl can be used to develop spiritual vision by chanting *karakia* (prayers, incantations) which express that desire.

wird (A/P) (pl. *awrād*) *Lit.* litany; an invocation repeated during prayers; the continuous spoken or mental repetition of a short invocation (*dhikr*); the particular repetition practised by a Sufi order; a portion of the *Qur'ān* used for recital; devotional exercise, devotions.

Repetition of a litany, together with other forms of repetition or remembrance (*dhikr*), are a part of Sufi life. Each *zāwiyah* (group) of a Sufi order holds regular assemblies (*majlis*), where the members practise communal repetition (*dhikr*) and the recitation of litanies (*awrād*), together with the usual Muslim prayers. The litanies (*awrād*) and the *dhikr* are often said with the

help of a rosary (*subḥah*) of ninety-nine beads.¹ The practice is also prevalent in Sufi *khānaqāhs* (monasteries). The recitation of litanies is the seventh of the ten monastic rules laid down by the early Sufi, Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, each rule founded on a passage from the *Qurʾān*:

Between evening prayers and bedtime prayers, let them occupy themselves with repeating some litany (*wirdī u ẓikrī*).

Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATSI p.317, in SIM p.46

After listing the ten rules, Abū Saʿīd then adds:

Furthermore, let them spend their hours of leisure in one of three things: either in the study of theology, or in some recitation (*wirdī*), or in bringing comfort to someone.

Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, in Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATSI p.317; cf. in SIM p.46

Repetition of a litany is also practised by individuals in solitude. Ibn al-ʿArabī describes the devotional life of Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Mujāhid:

A man learned in the sacred sciences and a jurist of the Malikite school, he taught at the mosque of *al-Muqaybirāt*. He lived his life in accordance with the sayings of the Prophet, on whom be blessings and peace, “Reckon with yourselves before you are brought to the Reckoning.” Thus he would make a note of all his thoughts, actions, words, whatever he had heard, and similar things. After the prayer of the nightfall, he would seclude himself in his room and go over all his actions of that day which demanded repentance and repented of them. He would do likewise with all that called for his gratitude. He would then compare all his actions with what was required of him by the sacred Law. Having done this he would sleep a little, after which he would rise to say his litanies (*wird*) and pray in accordance with the custom of the Prophet.² Thus he would sleep and pray alternately throughout the night.

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Durrah, in SOA p.146

Many Sufis have emphasized the importance of the recitation of litanies, although it is sometimes unclear whether inner or outer practice is being recommended. Al-Qushayrī employs a commonly used wordplay between *wārid* (inspiration) and *wird* or *awrād*. Spiritual uplift, he says, arises from the recitation of litanies:

I heard the master Abū ʿAlī al-Daqqāq, God have mercy upon him, say: “Inspirations (*wāridāt*) arise from litanies (*awrād*). Whoever has no outward litany (*wird*) has no inner inspiration (*wārid*).”

Al-Qushayrī, Tarjamah-ʾi Risālah, RQQQ p.37; cf. in EIM p.113, in SSE8 p.5

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh wrote a number of litanies bearing such titles as *The Litany of Light*, *The Litany of the Ocean*, and *The Litany of Victory*. They are based on verses from the *Qur’ān* interspersed with his own words on the subject of divine unity, and are still chanted today. In his *Book of Wisdom* (*Kitāb al-Ḥikam*), he also praises the practice of *wird*. From the deeply mystical character of the remainder of his teachings, it seems likely that he is referring to silent, mental repetition, especially during the day:

Only the ignorant man scorns the repetition of litany (*wird*).
 Inspiration (*wārid*) is to be found in the hereafter,
 while litany (*wird*) vanishes with the vanishing of this world;
 But it is more fitting to be occupied with something
 for which there is no substitute.
 Litany (*wird*) is what He seeks from you;
 Inspiration (*wārid*) is what you seek from Him.
 What comparison is there between what He seeks from you
 and what you seek from Him?

Ibn ‘Aṭā’ Illāh, Kitāb al-Ḥikam 12:112, HAAI pp.64–65; cf. BWIC p.75

In some instances, there is no doubt that the inner practice is being advocated as superior to the outer. Included among Ibn al-Fāriḍ’s poetic record of his many efforts in quest of the Divine, he writes of “reciting litanies (*awrād*) alone” and in “silence”:

I filled my moments reciting litanies (*awrād*) alone,
 in proper silence and reverent prayer,
 awaiting the arrival of rapture.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tā’rīyah 271, DFQM p.72; cf. SVSL pp.150–51

Other Sufis have been similarly explicit:

Litany (*wird*) is an invocation recited to attract God’s attention for the attainment of one’s desires. Certain *ṣūfīs* prefer remembrance in the heart to vocal litany (*wird*), the essence of their view being expressed in this verse:

There is no grace for soul and heart in vocal litany:
 wine spilled down your front will not make you inebriated.³

Javād Nūrbakhsh, Sufi Symbolism, FNI15 p.122, SSE15 p.113

As Abū al-Ḥasan Sīrwanī put it, “*Ṣūfīs* are concerned with inrushes (*wāridāt*) to the heart, not with litanies (*awrād*) on the tongue.” ...
 Abū ‘Alī Kātib said: “Those who recite litanies (*awrād*) have no heart.”

Anṣārī, Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah 406, 323, TSAA pp.483, 383; cf. in SSE15 p.113

1. See R.A. Nicholson, *Sufis of Andalusia*, SOA p.59.
2. *Qur'ān* 73:1–7.
3. Unattributed, in *FNI15* p.122, in *SSE15* p.113.

worship Adoration, devotion, veneration, especially of a religious or spiritual nature, directed towards God or any deity or supernatural power, ancestors, or anything regarded as sacred or holy, and arising from a sense that there is a divine or higher Reality that transcends the material world; a natural response to contact with the transcendental, the supernatural, or the Divine; often associated externally with rites, ceremonies, prayer, sermons and particular postures, *etc.*, as well as sacred music, dance, art, and drama; an outward expression of the need to exult or praise the sacred, or to provide an outlet for feelings of inner joy and gratitude; a source of inspiration and the increase of religious emotion; associated internally with meditation or silent inner prayer; spiritually, an innate feeling of the soul and mind when brought into touch with a higher Reality or God.

Over the course of human history, worship has taken many forms. In most modern, ‘civilized’ societies external worship is largely contained within established religious frameworks. In ancient societies, worship was related to all aspects of life. Hunter-gatherer as well as agrarian communities performed acts of ritual worship to ensure the continued supply of food and crops. The continuation of life itself was often regarded as dependent upon the performance of certain forms of ritual worship. Fertility cults were also common in the ancient Middle East, based upon the worship of a deity such as the Sumerian Damuzi (who became the Akkadian Tammuz). In the societies of ancient Greece and Rome, worship of and offerings to the gods were deemed essential for the successful outcome of ventures, personal or national.

Communal worship and shared belief help to create social coherence and a sense of individual well-being and belonging. The downside of this aspect of worship is the tendency towards conservatism, and the dogmatic belief that rituals and ceremonies must be performed in a particular manner, at certain times and places, and even that their form is divinely instituted, all other forms of worship being wrong. Human beings then become victims of their own creations.

Worship can also arise from awe or fear of the known or unknown forces that shape material existence. Among indigenous societies, dangerous animals, such as snakes or crocodiles, may be venerated from a belief that propitiation is required. The sun may be worshipped as an extraordinary, powerful and inexplicable phenomenon that is essential to life. Deities associated with natural events may be worshipped to ensure the continuation of life and avert disaster. It is true that these are not spiritual forms of worship; but since belief is not subject to rational analysis – and any object of worship

automatically becomes awe-inspiring – it can be said that any worship is based on fear and perplexity. The environment as well as the worshippers also benefit from veneration of nature. But essentially, worship arises from the need to form a close relationship with the Divine or some other deity, who can be a source of strength to face the uncertainties of life. All these forms of worship are distant echoes of the true spiritual worship and longing of the soul for its divine Source. Human beings are spiritual beings who never stop seeking their spiritual Essence.

Spiritual worship arises naturally because the soul is of the same essence as the Divine. Essentially, all worship is a recognition of this kinship, to a greater or lesser extent, even if it becomes degraded into superstition. Some inkling of spiritual worship may be experienced when overawed by the grandeur of a beautiful and powerful physical vista, or when deeply moved by some beautiful music. But this is only a poor reflection of the far purer worship that the soul feels when in conscious contact with the Divine within. As Nancy Mayorga describes it:

You never know what real worship means until you have felt that upsurge of divine energy in you, or its descent upon you like a benediction, or its invasion like a flood of delight, or its sudden warm brilliance through every fibre of your being. Then you bow your head in recognition, in awe, in gratitude, and whisper, “My Lord and my God!” That is true worship. That is adoration.

Nancy Mayorga, Hunger of the Soul, HSDM p.10

This is worship of the Spirit in the spirit. As Jesus said:

But the hour is coming, and now is,
when the true worshippers will worship the Father
in spirit and in truth;
For such the Father seeks to worship Him.
God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him
must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

John 4:23–24, RSV

Such worship requires no outward ceremony or ritual, which may in fact serve to distract the mind from more perfect inner concentration. Explaining this passage in *John*, Gregory Palamas says that God is worshipped in the spirit “by conceiving the Incorporeal incorporeally”. Then He is worshipped both everywhere and nowhere, within space and outside of it:

For thus they will truly behold Him everywhere in His spirit and His truth. Since God is spirit, He is incorporeal. That which is incorporeal is not situated in place, nor is it circumscribed by spatial boundaries.

Thus he who claims that God must be worshipped in certain restricted places within the plenitude of heaven and earth, neither speaks nor worships truly. As incorporeal, God is nowhere; as God, He is everywhere. For if there were a mountain or place or creature where God is not, He would be circumscribed by something. He is, therefore, everywhere, since He has no limit. . . . Since He sustains and embraces everything, He is in Himself both everywhere and beyond everything, and is worshipped by His true worshippers in His Spirit and His Truth.

Gregory Palamas, On Natural and Theological Science 60, Philokalia, PCT4 p.374

Spiritual worship ultimately transcends religious or cultic worship; but this does not mean that religious worship has no place in life. Within the limitations of decent human behaviour, all people should be free to worship in whatever way appeals to them, according to their temperament and culture. As 'Ināyat Khān explains:

The forms of worship of all the different religions are necessarily different. It depends upon what one is accustomed to, what is akin to one's nature. One cannot make a common rule, and say that this form is wrong and that form is right. One person will perhaps feel more exaltation in a form of worship, which includes some art. It stimulates his emotional nature. Music, pictures, perfumes, colours, and light, all these have an effect upon such a person. Another can concentrate better if there is nothing in the place of worship to catch his attention. It is all a matter of temperament. It is not wrong to prefer the one or the other. The Sufi sees the variety of forms as different ideals. He does not attach importance to the outer expression. If there is a sincere spirit behind it, if a person has a feeling for worship, it does not matter what form of worship it is. In church, in an open place, everywhere there is an answer to the feeling for worship.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK9 p.278

See also: **prayer** (8.5), **sacrifice**.

wuḍū' (A), **wuzū** (P) *Lit.* purity, cleanness; the lesser ablution, as opposed to *ghusl*, the greater ablution, both being ritual Muslim ablutions involving a series of rites and procedures; necessary before prayer or before touching or reciting from the *Qur'ān*. The way in which Muḥammad performed *wuḍū'*, which is regarded as the correct method, is recorded in the *ḥadīth*:

He poured some out on to his hand and washed each hand twice, and then rinsed his mouth and snuffed water up his nose and blew it out three times. Then he washed his face three times and both of his arms

up to the elbows twice. He then wiped his head with both hands, taking his hands from his forehead to the nape of his neck, and then bringing them back to where he had begun. Then he washed his feet.

Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa' 2:1.1, HM

A great many *ḥadīth* contain anecdotes concerning various additional circumstances that relate to *wuḍū'*.¹ For example, *wuḍū'* before prayer, or before touching or reciting from the *Qur'ān*, must be performed after waking, after attending to the call of nature, after passing wind, and after any kind of sexual contact. However, *wuḍū'* before prayer is unnecessary after eating or after a nosebleed. The benefits of *wuḍū'* are also mentioned, for instance:

If a man does *wuḍū'*, ensuring that he does it correctly, and then performs his prayer, he will be forgiven everything that he does between then and the next time for prayer.

Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭa' 2:6.30; cf. HM

To the Sufis, although the majority practised as good Muslims, inner cleansing is always regarded as higher than the outer. Thus, Ḥāfiẓ says that the real cleansing is the ablution made in the “water” of divine “love”:

The very moment I performed ablution (*wuḍū'*)
with water from the spring of love,
I cried, “God is great (*Allāhu akbar*)!” four times,
over everything that is.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīwān, DHA p.42, DIH p.97; cf. DHWC (27:2) p.81

In this context, “God is great!” refers to a part of the prayer said for the dead, in which the refrain is repeated four times. Ḥāfiẓ means that when all his impurities were washed away by complete immersion in divine love, everything in creation seemed to be dead, through unconsciousness of this love.

‘Aṭṭār writes that the dirt to be washed away is that of the individual self:

Purify your consciousness through your (inner) ablutions (*wuḍū'*),
and pray before your (inner) reality.
What is ablution (*wuḍū'*)?
Meditation of the heart to remove the dirt from the pure heart.
What is other than your individual self? Your being.
You must put your self aside.

‘Aṭṭār, Dīwān, Qaṣā'id 16:835–37, DASN p.52; cf. in SSE3 p.79

Rūmī says that while washing the body with water lies within human power, washing the dirt of the self from the pristine spirit can only be accomplished by God:

In the ritual ablution (*wužū*), a separate form of prayer
 for each member of the body has been handed down in tradition.
 When you snuff up water into your nose,
 beg the scent of paradise from the self-sufficient Lord,
 in order that that scent may lead you towards paradise:
 For the scent of the rose will guide you to the rose bush.

When you perform the act of cleansing,
 the proper form of prayer and words is this:
 “O Lord, cleanse me from this impurity.
 My hand has reached this part and has washed it,
 but my hand is unable to wash the spirit.
 You, by whom the spirit of the unworthy is made worthy,
 the hand of Your bounty reaches the spirit.
 This which I, vile as I am, is as much as I can do:
 O gracious One, make clean that which lies beyond.
 O God, I have washed my skin clean of dirt:
 do You wash this dear one (the spirit) clean of worldly taints.”

Rūmī, Mašnavī IV:2213–20; cf. MJR4 pp.394–95

See also: **ghusl**.

1. *E.g. Ḥadīth Mālik Muwaṭṭaʿ* 2:1.1–2:30.110, 15:1.1–15:2.2, *HM*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 1:4.137–1:7.344, *HSB*; *Ḥadīth Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* 2:432–86, *HSM*.

wǔjiè (C) *Lit.* five (*wǔ*) precepts (*jiè*); the set of five basic precepts designated for Daoist lay practitioners based on the five precepts of Buddhism. See **jiè**.

wǔyuè (C) *Lit.* five (*wǔ*) high mountains (*yuè*); the five sacred mountains of Daoism. See **shèngdì**.

xíngjiǎo (C), **angya** (J) *Lit.* going on foot, travelling on foot, wandering on foot; Chinese *Chán* and Japanese *Zen* Buddhist terms for a pilgrimage, especially for a pilgrimage from one monastery to another or from one master to another; also called *henzan* (J. extensive study).

In the *Chán* tradition, a *xíngjiǎo* is an arduous pilgrimage, generally performed by a monk in search of a master, who travels from one mountain monastery to another, in the hope of meeting the abbot and engaging with him in a session of questions and answers. It is also a time in which master and prospective student make an assessment of each other.

In more ancient times, an *angya* was the Zen Buddhist pilgrimage of a monk or nun, which could last several years, travelling from one monastery to another or from one master to another. The intention might be to find a suitable master with whom to start training; or a master himself might encourage a disciple, whether a beginner or an advanced student, to seek the guidance of other masters with different teaching styles. This would not only benefit the disciple, but would give him a breadth of experience that would be valuable should he himself become the master of a monastery one day.

In modern Japan, an *angya* is generally a pilgrimage made by a trainee monk or nun (*unsui*) who has undergone preliminary training in a local monastery, and is seeking more advanced training under a different master at one of the main monasteries. Entry to the new monastery has become a traditional and ritualized procedure. The trainee wears or carries certain items prescribed for such pilgrims – a round bamboo hat with a low brim, a black cloak, white cotton leggings, a small bundle of summer and winter clothes including a full set of robes, a straw raincoat, straw sandals, and a satchel containing such things as a razor for shaving the head, begging bowls, and some Buddhist texts. Making his approach to the monastery, he requests entry, presenting a letter of introduction if he has one, but is refused entry by the monk in charge of admissions, citing lack of space or funds as the reason. The novice then waits outside the gate for some days, even in adverse weather, until he is admitted on a probationary basis. The intention is to test the resolve and sincerity of the applicant. Once admitted, the trainee is subjected to more tests as he is confined to a solitary cell under strenuous conditions before being finally accepted into the monastery.¹

For the genuine seekers among the monks, their pilgrimages were by no means arid or commonplace affairs. Many things could happen to expand their perspectives and deepen their spiritual understanding, according to their receptivity. A story is told of Master Fǎyǎn (J. Hōgen, 885–958), founder of the Fǎyǎn school of Chán and abbot of the Qīngliáng (J. Seiryō) monastery in Nánjīng, when he was a young monk:

When he was young, Hōgen travelled about doing *angya* (visiting masters). One day, his journey was interrupted by rain and floods, and he stopped at a monastery where Jizō, who later became his teacher, was living. Jizō said, “What do you hope to gain by doing *angya*?”

“I don’t know,” answered Hōgen.

“Not knowing is the most appropriate,” said Jizō.

This remark aroused Hōgen’s curiosity. Next morning, the master was seeing him off. When they came to the gate and were parting, Jizō pointed to a stone by the gate and said, “It is said, ‘The entire universe is just one mind.’ So tell me, is this stone inside your mind or outside it?”

Hōgen answered, “It is inside.”

Jizō said, “Isn’t it very difficult for you to carry this stone around with you in your mind?” Hōgen could not answer. He accepted Jizō as his teacher and remained at the monastery to study under him.

Katsuki Sekida, on Mumonkan, Case 26; cf. TZC p.90

1. See “angya,” *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Zen Buddhism, IEZB*.

yab yum (T) *Lit.* father (*yab*) and mother (*yum*); master and mistress; a posture symbolizing the union and harmony between the masculine and feminine principles in nature, expressed as celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* or deities in sexual union with their consorts; a common feature of Tibetan Buddhist art, especially associated with *anuttara-yoga tantra*; corresponds to portrayals of sexual union between the Hindu deities *Shiva* and *Shakti*; popular in India, Bhutan and Nepal, but never fully accepted in China and Japan.

Yab yum is represented in all forms of media including painting, sculpture and engraving in a wide variety of materials. The male and female deities are commonly portrayed in an overt sexual act with the male deity sitting in the lotus posture, with his consort sitting astride his lap.

Numerous interpretations exist of *yab yum* symbolism, the most prevalent associating the male figure with the active or positive principle of compassion (*karuṇā*) and skilful means (*upāya-kaushalya*), and the female with the passive or negative principle of insight or wisdom (*prajñā*). In this context, positive and negative do not imply a value judgment – the symbolism represents the natural duality inherent in all natural and cosmic forces. *Yab yum* represents the union of passive wisdom with active compassion and the ‘skilful means’ of putting this compassion into practice. Their union leads to completeness and oneness and the bliss associated with enlightenment, at which time the veils of ignorance and duality are dissolved.

In some forms of Tibetan tantric practice, the sexual polarity of male and female and their symbolic union in *yab yum* is a central aspect of the teachings. This union is said to be realized by the practitioner as a mystical experience within his or her own body, which – with the guidance of a suitable *guru* – is believed to lead the practitioner to liberation. But while the practice might involve male and female partners, tantric *gurus* have emphasized that the union was not intended to be physical, despite the imagery of the *yi dam* (meditation deity) in *yab yum* with his consort. In fact, advanced forms of *yab yum* practice are done mentally, without a physical partner. The aim is to be in full control of the powerful sexual energy and to redirect it through the proper channels in the subtle body with a view to developing the mind to a higher-level experience of bliss, overcoming duality and attaining salvation.

In this context, physical sexual tantric practice is considered an aberration of Buddhist teachings. Some tantric schools, taking the *yab yum* literally, have

externalized the symbolism, making a ritual out of actual physical union. It is claimed that when sexual union is realized as a mystical experience within the practitioners' own bodies, it can, with the guidance of a *guru*, lead the practitioner to liberation. But while the tantric ritual may involve two partners, male and female, it is often emphasized by tantric *gurus* that the union was not intended to be physical. This philosophy and practice have been greatly misunderstood in the West.

See also: **Vajrayāna** (►4).

yajña (S/H), **yañña** (Pa), **yagya**, **yag** (H), **yagg**, **jagg** (Pu) *Lit.* sacrifice; in Vedic literature, worship, devotion, prayer, praise; in post-Vedic literature, act of worship or devotion, offering, oblation, sacrifice; a sacrificial rite, a sacrificial feast; any pious, charitable or devotional act; also, one of the names of the Hindu deity *Vishṇu*.

Many activities involving some form of sacrifice, not necessarily of a ritual nature, are called *yajñas*. Charitable activities, for instance, are *dravyamaya-yajña* (material sacrifice); the sacrifice of some of life's comforts is *tapomaya-yajña* (austerity sacrifice); the sacrifice of time and effort in the study of Vedic literature is *svādhyāya-yajña* (study sacrifice); and the practice of *yoga* such as Patañjali's *yoga*, *haṭha yoga* and *ashṭāṅga yoga* is called *yoga-yajña*.

In Vedic times, *yajñas* or sacrificial rites formed an integral part of everyday life. "*Svarga-kāmo yajeta* (those who desire heaven must perform sacrifices)"¹ was an important Vedic injunction. Vedic *yajñas* were often colourful and picturesque occasions, accompanied by singing, chanting, and even theatre. Many *yajñas* involved offerings and libations made upon a sacrificial fire, lit upon an altar. Some *yajñas* were simple domestic affairs, such as the *agnihotra*; others were huge, seasonal and public festivals, attended by vast numbers. The ceremonies were often so complex that specialist experts, the *brāhmaṇs*, were required to remember all the details and to conduct them correctly – a role that was jealously guarded.

Yajñas were held to reverence, to invoke the blessings of, and to propitiate or appease five classes of being: the supreme Being (*Brahman*) and the sages; ancestors; deities; animals and other beings; and human beings. These were known as the *pañcha-mahāyajña* (five great sacrifices or acts of devotion), and generally involved simple daily rites. The *pañcha-mahāyajña* were listed by the sage Manu, renowned organizer of Hindu society:

Study and teaching (of the *Veda*)

is sacrifice to *Brahman* (*brahmayajña*);

The refreshing libation (*tarpaṇa*)

is sacrifice to the ancestors (*pitṛi-yajña*);

The offering into the fire
 is sacrifice to the gods (*deva-yajña*);
 The offering of foodstuffs
 is sacrifice for *bhūtas* (*bhūta-yajña*);
 And honouring guests is sacrifice to human beings (*nara-yajña*).

Manu Smṛiti 3:70; cf. *LMDS* p.49, *SBE25* pp.87–88

The essential idea behind these five *yajñas* was a reminder that no one lives in isolation. Everyone owes a debt to the Supreme (*Brahman*), to the holy books that provide guidance, and to the sages who wrote them; to the ancestors, who have gone before; to the deities, who control the forces of nature; to other beings in nature, who provide food or are inadvertently killed by human beings; and to other human beings, who provide support and friendship. Described in a little more detail, they are:

1. *Brahmayajña* or *veda-yajña*. A sacrifice to *Brahman*, the *Vedas*, and the sages which consists of studying, teaching, repeating, or meditating on the *Vedas*. This includes recitation of *Gāyatrī Mantra*.
2. *Pitṛi-yajña*. A daily offering of libations of water (*tarpaṇa*) and rice balls (*piṇḍa*) to the ancestors.
3. *Deva-yajña*. An offering to the gods as in a simple *homa* (fire) sacrifice, such as pouring oblations of milk, curds and butter into the domestic sacrificial fire or placing a piece of wood with clarified butter in the fire. Sacrifice to the gods was regarded as an offering in order to sustain them in their task of maintaining the world. According to the *Vishṇu Purāṇa*, “By sacrifices, the gods are nourished.”²
4. *Bhūta-yajña*. Sacrifice to other beings who inhabit this world, including good and evil spirits, as well as animals and other creatures; performed by placing offerings on the ground for the spirits of the four elements (*bhūtas* or *tattvas*), and some in the garbage bin for the demons; also, feeding domestic as well as stray and wild animals and birds.
5. *Manushya-yajña*, *nara-yajña* or *purusha-yajña*. Hospitality to guests, giving alms to beggars, and providing food for the homeless and for mendicant monks.

Since it is difficult in modern times to perform the five sacrifices in the manner prescribed in the *Vedas*, a short cut has been devised in which *Gāyatrī Mantra* is repeated five times. It is believed that this is sufficient to provide the necessary spiritual sustenance to the sages, ancestors, deities, spirits, and humanity.

The benefits of a *yajña* to the one who institutes it (a *yajamāna*) are extolled in the *Brāhmaṇa* part of the *Vedas*. The *yajñas* were performed in order to obtain the favour of the gods by way of good crops, good livestock, good weather, good health, children and all the other gifts of life and nature that human beings need, both general and individual. *Yajñas* also had a primary function of expressing obeisance not only to the gods, but to the supreme Deity. Not all Vedic texts are in favour of the extensive *yajñas*. External religious observances were known as *karma-kāṇḍa* (the observance part), and it is natural that some people should have questioned the efficacy of a purely external approach towards changing the course of events or even maintaining the *status quo*. Even the *Ṛig Veda* says:

No one attains Him by religious ceremony (*karma*). . . .

No, not by *yajñas* can *Indra* be attained –

praised of all, resistless, valiant, bold in might.

Ṛig Veda 8:70.3; cf. CVAB p.62

The *Upanishads*, being the expressly spiritual part of the *Vedas*, also underplay the significance of *yajñas*:

In the *Upanishads*, we find a criticism of the empty and barren ritualistic religion. Sacrifices (*yajñas*) were relegated to an inferior position. They do not lead to final liberation; they take one to the world of the fathers (*pitṛiloka*) from which one has to return to earth again in due course. When all things are God's, there is no point in offering to Him anything except one's will, one's self.

S. Radhakrishnan, *Principal Upanishads*, PU p.49

In the attempt to bring people around to a more spiritual perspective, the *Upanishads* either criticize the efficacy of Vedic rites, or they try to provide them with a meaning that is relevant to spiritual life; for there is no greater 'sacrifice' than to seek and understand the spiritual purpose of life. Hence, the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* says, "Truly, a person is himself a sacrifice (*yajña*)," and it goes on to draw a parallel between the number of syllables in the metre of the verses recited at the morning, midday and evening oblations, and the years in the three phases of human life (youth, middle, and old age). The first span takes up twenty-four years, and there are twenty-four syllables in the metre of the *Gāyatrī* (morning) hymn. Likewise, there are forty-four and forty-eight syllables respectively in the midday and evening hymns, adding up to an extended lifespan of one hundred and sixteen years. For any illness that strikes a man during any of these three periods, the *Upanishad* provides a *mantra* to be repeated that entreats his *prāṇas* (subtle life energies) to take away the illness, because he is himself a sacrifice (*yajña*).³

The *Upanishad* goes on to equate the everyday aspects of human life, together with the practices and good qualities of a spiritual person, with other ceremonies and sacrifices:

When one hungers, thirsts, and abstains from pleasures – these are one’s initiatory rites (*dīkshā*, which require fasting and abstention from pleasures).

When one eats, drinks and enjoys pleasures, then one participates in the *upashada* ceremonies (part of the *soma-yajña*, which includes some food).

When one laughs, eats, and enjoys sexual intercourse – then one joins in the chants and recitations (*stuta-shāstra*).

And austerity (*tapas*), charity (*dāna*), honesty (*ārjava*), non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), and truthfulness (*satya-vachana*) – these are the gifts for the priests (*dakṣiṇā*).

Chhāndogya Upanishad 3:17.1–4

After the whole ceremony or sacrifice of life is over, the “final ablution (*avabṛitha*)” is death, and the ritual pouring of *soma* juice symbolizes rebirth of the soul. “In the final hour,” counsels the *Chhāndogya Upanishad*, “one should take refuge in these three thoughts: You are indestructible; You are unshaken; You are the very essence of life.”⁴

The author of this *Upanishad* is clearly fond of wordplay, for he also relates sacrifices (*yajña*), a long cycle of sacrifices (*sattrāyaṇa*), the vow of silence (*mauna*), the life of a hermit (*araṇyāyana*), and fasting (*anāshakāyana*) to a disciplined spiritual life (*brahmacharya*). “Now what people call sacrifice (*yajña*) is really a disciplined spiritual life (*brahmacharya*),” and so on. Here, the point is made by some ingenious wordplay: *yajña* sounds something like *yo jñāta* (he who knows); *sattrāyaṇa* like *sat* (the true) *trāyamāṇa* (protecting); *anāshakāyana* like *anāsha* (unperishing); *mauna* like *manana* (meditation), and *araṇyāyana* like *Ara* and *Ṇya*, the two seas in the world of *Brahmā*, which is attained by one who leads a disciplined spiritual life.⁵

The *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, on the other hand, makes its point quite simply. Sacrifices, it observes, are “unsafe vessels”. The “fools who cling to them” wander about like the blind led by the blind, receiving knocks and blows, finally succumbing to old age, death, and rebirth. Here, the “eighteen” are the sixteen priests, the instigator of the *yajña*, and his wife:

Unsafe vessels are these sacrificial rites (*yajñas*),
 conducted by the eighteen who support this inferior work.
 Fools who cling to them as the supreme good
 fall victim again and again to old age and death.

Fools they are, dwelling in darkness,
 wise in their own conceit,
 and puffed up with vain scholarship.
 They wander about, afflicted by many ills,
 like the blind led by the blind.

Muṇḍaka Upanishad 1:2.7–8

The *Paingala Upanishad* says that such external activities only occupy the attention when there has been no realization of the inner Reality:

So long as there is no attainment of the Real, there will be endless ceremonies (*karmas*), observances of purity (*shaucha*), recitations (*japa*), performance of sacrifices (*yajñas*), and visits to places of pilgrimage (*tīrtha-yātrā*).

Paingala Upanishad 4:18

And the *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* observes that all such rites and observances are a part of the *māyā* (illusion) in which the entire creation is engulfed:

Sacred verses, sacrifices (*yajña*), rites (*kratu*), vows (*vratas*), what has been, what is to be, whatever the *Vedas* teach, this universe, and ourselves as well – everything has been projected by the lord of *māyā*, and by *māyā* is everything entangled.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 4:9

Sacrifices existed for many purposes and occasions. Special sacrifices were performed by kings and chieftains in order to gain power, to confirm sovereignty over territory, and to expand their dominions. Renowned *yajñas* included the *rājasūya-yajña*, a major *yajña* performed by the monarch of a large area in which the lesser kings and princes took part to mark his undisputed sovereignty. This *yajña* was also performed at the time of the coronation of a new king. The elaborate *ashvamedha-yajña* (horse sacrifice), used for the purposes of territorial expansion or for a monarch to test his supremacy over other rulers in the area was also well known. *Yajñas* were sometimes performed with evil intent, like those intended to cause injury to enemies or to bring about sickness and death.

The slaughter of animals was not always integral to Vedic *yajñas*. Often, only the recitation of Vedic texts together with various offerings were required. Where the sacrifice of an animal was called for, the central means and instrument of sacrifice was fire. In most *yajñas* of this nature, the victims were animals (generally cows, horses, and elephants), although the sacrifice of human beings was not unknown.

Such sacrifices raised a well-known dichotomy. The *brāhmaṇs* or priests who officiated, as well as many ordinary Hindus, were vegetarian. Yet, in different places, Vedic texts enjoin both strict vegetarianism and animal sacrifice. The opinion therefore developed that it was a sin to kill animals, except in a sacrifice. After a sacrifice, the celebrants then ate the animal with enjoyment, safe in the ‘knowledge’ that this did not incur bad *karma*.

There were also some ceremonies in which a householder was required to kill animals, such as the *shrāddha* for deceased relatives. Failure to sacrifice animals at such times was regarded as sinful. In fact, according to the *Manu Smṛiti*, if those who are invited to a *shrāddha* and certain other ceremonies fail to partake of the meat that is offered, they will be born as animals in their next twenty-one births.⁶

In all *yajñas*, it was the *yajamāna* (instigator of the *yajña*) who was supposed to be the primary beneficiary; but the priests also benefited greatly. *Dakṣiṇās* (gifts, donations) were an integral part of all *yajñas*. In fact, the benefit and honour received from the *yajña* by the *yajamāna* was deemed to be in direct proportion to the amount paid to the priests, who were partial to gifts of cows, cattle, and horses. Gifts of houses and land were supposed to bring great merit to the *yajamāna*. Many ancient kings emptied their treasury to pay for one or other of the elaborate *yajñas* performed for protecting themselves and their family, and for ensuring their sovereignty.

The *Devī-bhāgavata Purāṇa* maintains that it was partially due to the corrective influence of Buddhism concerning the killing of animals that blood sacrifices gradually died out:

We bow down to Your Buddha incarnation, that great *deva* (god) who came down here to put a stop to the slaughtering of innocent animals and to the performance of wicked sacrificial ceremonies (*yajña*). . . .

Animal sacrifices that are found in the *Vedas* have been inserted by the twice-born (*brāhmaṇs*), who are addicted to enjoyments and the pleasures of the senses. But there is no virtue higher than non-injury (*ahiṃsā*).

Devī-bhāgavata Purāṇa 10:5, 4:13.56; cf. in *PU* p.50 (n.1)

According to a Buddhist text, when the *brāhmaṇ* Kūṭadanta asked the Buddha the best way to perform a really effective sacrifice, the Buddha replied that animal sacrifice is a needless killing of animals, as well as a waste of resources. The best sacrifice, he said, is to lead a Buddhist way of life, adding, “There is no sacrifice (Pa. *yañña*) man can celebrate, O *brāhmaṇ*, higher and sweeter than this.”⁷

Occasional attempts have been made to restore the practice of *yajña* in modern times, but the instances of *yajña* are very few, and the sacrifice of animals is not known to have taken place.

The Vedic concept of sacrifice as a ritualistic act was interpreted in the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gītā* as giving up or discarding the idea of I-ness or egotism. Human beings are attached to themselves more than anything else. Therefore, to become truly detached, to relinquish the ego in total and unconditional surrender to the Divine, becoming completely dependent upon Him is the greatest sacrifice a human being can make.

Like the *Upanishads*, the *Bhagavad Gītā* sees the whole of human life as a sacrifice. A person who dedicates all his actions to God as a service or offering (*yajña*), having no personal interest in the outcome of those actions, is freed from bondage to the results of those actions:

All actions performed in this world,
unless they are performed as an offering (*yajña*) (to God),
are the cause of bondage.
Therefore, work for the sake of God,
free from personal attachment.

Bhagavad Gītā 3:9

He who is without attachment, who is liberated,
who is firmly established in the knowledge of God,
who performs all deeds (*karma*) as a service (*yajña*) to God –
(His actions) entirely melt away (leaving no effect).

Bhagavad Gītā 4:23

Many other mystics have echoed the same truth. No action goes without some result, and the performance of sacrifices (*yagya*) with a pure and sincere mind, as with austerities (*tap*), charity (*dān*) and other good deeds, may not go unrewarded, but will not lead to liberation. Maharaj Sawan Singh explains:

Those souls who, while in the human body, performed *yagya*, *tap*, *dān* and other meritorious deeds, or worshipped *Vishnu*, *Shiva* or *Indra* with the object of achieving heaven, are taken to various heavens to enjoy the fruit of their good actions. These are the gods and angels. In these heavens also there are sense pleasures, as in this world. There, the body is astral and the period of stay is very long, according to the merit of the deeds done. After finishing the merited period of enjoyments, these souls are again sent down to *māt lok* (mortal world). All paradises and hells are within the cycle of eighty-four (*chaurāsī*).

Maharaj Sawan Singh, in Call of the Great Master, CGM p.10

It may be presumed that not every sacrifice is rewarded in this fashion. Those who perform sacrifices involving the slaughter of animals are unlikely to reap

heavenly benefits as a reward for the suffering they have caused. In different ages or *yugas*, however, according to Indian mythological cosmology, different conditions are said to prevail and different methods of God-realization are adopted in each – *yagya*, or external religious observances, being the prevailing method in the second age, *tretā-yuga*. In *kaliyuga*, the present age, however, Tulsīdās, Ravidās, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh and others have indicated that only the Word or Name of God (*Nām*) can give salvation. Tulsīdās is retelling the story of the *Rāmāyaṇa*, using the term *makh* for ‘sacrifice’:

In all the four ages, at all times, and throughout the three worlds (heaven, earth, and the subterranean regions) creatures have been rid of grief by repeating the Name. The verdict of the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas* as well as saints is just this: that love of (the Name) of *Rām* is the reward of all virtuous acts. In the first age, through meditation (*dhyān*); in the second, through various kinds of sacrifice (*makh*); and in *dvāpara*, the Lord is propitiated through worship (*pūjā*). This *kaliyuga*, however, is simply corrupt and the root of all impurities, where the mind of man wallows like a fish in the ocean of sin. In this terrible age, the Name alone is the wish-fulfilling tree, the very thought of which puts an end to all the illusions of the world. In this *kaliyuga*, the Name of *Rām* is the bestower of one’s desired object; it is beneficial to oneself in the next world and to one’s father and mother in this world. In this *kaliyuga*, neither *karma* (religious observances), nor *bhakti* (devotion), nor yet *bibek* (discernment, knowledge) avails; the Name of *Rām* is the only resort.

Tulsīdās, Rām Charit Mānas 1:26.1–4; cf. RCML p.36

In the *satyuga* was truth (*sat*);
 In *tretā-yuga*, charitable feasts (*jagī*);
 In *dvāpara-yuga*, there was worship (*pūjā*).
 In those three *yugas*, people held to these three ways.
 But in *kaliyuga*, *Nām* is your only support.

Ravidās, Ādi Granth 346, AGK

In *kaliyuga*, rituals and religious observances (*karm dharm*)
 are of no avail;
 Without *Nām*, no one can gain salvation (*uddhār*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 38:3.11, SBP p.337; cf. DSM p.123

Now *kaliyuga* has come: plant the Name (*Nām*).
 It is not the season to plant other seeds.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1185, AGK

Because people in past ages were spiritually purer and cleaner, and their worship more serene, the forms of worship that they practised took them to

higher levels. But ultimately they would have needed the *Shabd* and a *guru* to reach the highest stage of God-realization. In the present age, rites and rituals do not take anyone very far or, often, anywhere at all.

See also: **ashvamedha-yajña, tapas.**

1. *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* 16:15.5.
2. *Vishṇu Purāṇa* 1:6, VPW p.45.
3. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 3:16.1–7.
4. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 3:17.5–6.
5. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 8:5.1–4.
6. *Manu Smṛiti* 5:35, SBE25 p.174.
7. *Dīgha Nikāya* 5, *Kūṭadanta Sutta*, PTSD1 p.147, DBRD p.183.

yajñopavīta (S), **yagyopavīt** (H) *Lit.* thread (*upavīta*) sacrifice (*yajña*); the Hindu thread ceremony. See **upanayana**.

yantra (S/H), **'khrul 'khor** (T) *Lit.* instrument, machine, device, contrivance; an instrument of holding or restraining, the suffix *'tra* indicating instrumentality; an esoteric and auspicious diagram, whose various parts are replete with symbolic meaning; usually comprised of interlocking and symmetrical geometric designs; variously believed to possess magical and healing powers, to create a sacred space around it, to ward off the effects of poison, to prevent attack by guns or knives, to bring good fortune of various kinds, and so on; an 'instrument' used in worship, ritual, or as a focus in meditation to help concentrate the mind; generally divided into *rakshā yantras* (instruments of protection) and *pūjā yantras* (instruments of worship); a specialized form of *maṇḍala*, widely used in tantric practices, where every god or goddess worshipped has a *yantra* of his or her own; often used along with *mantras*.

Yantras and their associated practices are prevalent in Hindu and Buddhist *tantra*, as well as in Jainism. In Southeast Asian Buddhism, *yantras* are commonly used by both monks and laypeople as auspicious images for tattoos, the work being performed by monks skilled in the art.¹ One of the most well-known *rakshā yantras* is the swastika (S. *svastika*), widely understood as a symbol of good fortune. Though stigmatized in the West since the first half of the twentieth century when the German Nazi Party adopted a right-facing variant slanted at forty-five degrees, the ancient *svastika* remains a popular auspicious symbol in Jain, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions.

In tantric Hinduism and Buddhism,² a *yantra*'s primary purpose is as a symbolic representation of a deity, infused with the deity's power and energy, and used as a focus for meditation or ritualized worship. The ultimate goal is for the *yantra* to be completely visualized within. Having accomplished this,

which itself demands a considerable degree of contemplative concentration, the practitioner may then go on to deconstruct the mental *yantra* entirely, together with his sense of individual consciousness. The intention is to experience pure, universal consciousness; or, expressed another way, to attain union with the Divine, conceptualized as the divine Mother.

The means employed to construct and consecrate a *yantra* are of great significance, and must be performed in the correct manner. Typically, a tantric *yantra* is made after ritual ablution and purification, meditation on the chosen deity, and various *yoga* practices involving breath control. Its construction is followed by the ritual of *prāṇa-pratishṭhā* (establishing the life energy). Before its consecration, the *yantra* is regarded as inert material, and the purpose of the consecration ritual is to breathe the life energy (*prāṇa*) of the deity into the *yantra* through ritualized invocations, offerings, prayer, and meditation. The ritual includes internal visualization of the *yantra* in association with the deity, together with his or her *yakshas* and *yakshīs* (spirit attendants, male and female).

Yantras may be permanent or temporary. They may be engraved or embossed on a metal plate (copper, bronze, silver, gold, *etc.*), outlined in sand, or drawn or painted on paper, wood, palm leaf, cloth or on the ground. There are many designs. The basic theme is almost invariably one of geometric symmetry, the most frequently encountered overall shapes being square, circular, or lotus-like. Some are simple, made of dots or triangles; others are more elaborate. Common motifs include a series of concentric circles, often enclosed by squares. In some, a geometrical lattice forms squares, rectangles, triangles, pentagons, hexagons, circles, spirals, petals, and other curved shapes. Sometimes numbers are placed in the squares and rectangles *etc.*, such that when they are summed in horizontal, vertical and diagonal directions, they all add up to the same number. Some have the letters of *bīja-mantras* (seed sounds) written into the geometrically formed cells. Some have both letters and numbers. *Yantras* may include the drawing of a lotus, and occasionally deities, men, women, animals, birds, musical instruments, weapons, and so forth. Some are multicoloured paintings, like images seen in a kaleidoscope.

Yantras are generally, but not always, small in comparison to *maṇḍalas*. *Maṇḍalas* can vary in size, and devotees may even enter larger, ground-level *maṇḍalas* during times of worship or at initiation ceremonies. Some may occupy an entire room or open courtyard. *Yantras*, on the other hand, are often small enough to be portable, unless they are an integral part of a statue or image. They are used by individuals in personal tantric rituals and meditation to depict in visual form the power and energy of the deity invoked. They are regarded as the ‘body’ of the individual’s *iṣṭa-deva* or *devatā* (chosen deity, male or female). They may represent the entire cosmos, the energies and levels that comprise it, with the human body as its microcosm. Being larger, *maṇḍalas* may contain a large number of images of deities, *buddhas*

and *bodhisattvas*, as well as *mantras*, while the smaller *yantras* rarely contain more than geometrical shapes.

Just as myths and allegories have characters and story lines that symbolize various metaphysical or mystical ideas, so too can those concepts be represented in the geometric designs of a *yantra*. The majority of *yantras* have a dot (*bindu*) in the centre. A dot is the fundamental unit from which lines and geometric patterns are formed. In this way, the dot symbolizes the potential energy and creative Source of the universe. Around the dot, there is a circle, symbolizing the encompassing ‘horizon’ of the material universe, which limits the spiritual vision of most human beings. Encompassing the whole is a square with four entrances, like a palace or temple. Within this is a circle or sometimes a square, often drawn in lotus petals, and known as the *bhū-pura* (earth city), which marks the boundaries of the *yantra*’s influence. The design of the inner portion of the *yantra* varies according to the attributes of the deity or deities, and other requirements of the symbolism. Other patterns found in *yantras* include two intersecting squares, one diagonally across the other, forming eight corners. This symbolizes the fact that every individual lives in his own unique subjective reality, an aspect of the ego or individuality that intersects with but does not entirely blend with the subjective reality of others.

One of the most well-known *yantras* is the *shrī yantra* (blessed *yantra*) or *shrī chakra* (blessed wheel), sacred symbol of *Shrī Vidyā*, a Hindu tantric school devoted to God as the divine Mother, which still exists in India, especially in the south, and bears many similarities to Kashmir Shaivism. The *shrī yantra* consists of five equilateral triangles, one inside the other, which symbolize the creative, female power or energy (*shakti*) of the Divine. Superimposed upon them are a further four equilateral triangles, one within the other, which symbolize the male aspect (*Shiva*) or consciousness. Usually, the five *shakti* triangles point downwards and the four *Shiva* triangles point upwards. Other interpreters add that the four upward-pointing triangles symbolize human spiritual potential, while the downward-pointing triangles denote material attraction.³

The geometric superimposition of these nine triangles creates forty-three smaller triangles, the whole of which is enclosed by a square *bhū-pura*, its perimeter bounded by three parallel lines, with four ‘entrances’, one on each side. Outside or within the *bhū-pura* are often three concentric circles. The circles and triangles, large and small, as well as the many corners, all symbolize some particular deity or aspect of creation. The particular deity associated with each of the smaller triangles is sometimes indicated by writing his or her name or respective *bīja-mantra* (seed sound) in Sanskrit letters within the triangle.

The central *bindu*, also called the *sarvānandamaya chakra* (wheel entirely made of bliss), symbolizes the goddess *Mahā-Tripura-Sundarī* (‘Great Beautiful One of the Three Cities’) to whom the *yantra* is dedicated. In a similar manner, the square enclosed by three parallel lines, the three concentric circles, the triangles and so on are all said to signify different parts of the

human body – the microcosm within which the Divine is to be sought. Here, the central *bindu* also signifies the *sahasrāra*, the thousand-petalled lotus in the crown of the head through which the soul passes on its way to the Divine. The *shrī yantra* is hence a symbol of both the macrocosm and the microcosm, the divine *Purusha* (Man), the Cosmic Being or Primal Man, a cosmogonic figure, who contains the whole earth within himself, and who represents the whole of everything. The *shrī yantra* is also used in tantric Buddhism.

Jain *yantras*⁴ commonly consist of concentric circles, within which are written the names of the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras*, together with the *namaskāra mantra* and the *bīja-mantras* of guardian deities (*shāsana-devatās*). Over forty *yantras* once existed in Jain ritual, but only a few are used at the present time. Among these is the *siddha-chakra* (wheel of perfection), also known as the *navapada* (nine petals), which is generally shaped like a lotus, and is used in *Shvetāmbara* ritual. The *siddha-chakra* symbolizes the Jain path to liberation (*moksha*) and omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*), and all the basic elements of Jain teaching are represented in its design. The nine-day *Shvetāmbara* festival of *Olī*, held twice a year, is dedicated to worship of the *siddha-chakra*. A similar *yantra*, known as the *navadevatā* (nine deities) is used by *Digambaras*. There are, or were, various restrictions concerning who could conduct rituals using *yantras* in the different Jain traditions.

Intriguing as *tantra* and *yantra* practice may be, many Indian *sants* and devotees have maintained that such practices are unnecessary if the intention is union with the Divine. Gopālakṛishṇa Bhāratī, a nineteenth-century Tamil devotee of *Shiva*, writes:

Those who give up their earthly egos and realize the Self
 will be protected by the omnipresent master,
 who will guard you like a commander-in-chief.
 Once you realize that the omnipresent Lord lives within you,
 it is your duty to preserve that realization and feel the Absolute.

In the state of enlightenment, doubts cease to exist.
 You become intoxicated with the nectar of bliss,
 and enjoy the Lord like a golden lady-in-waiting.
 You become blessed with the fountain of knowledge,
 and are able to conquer everything.

The practice of *ashtāṅga yoga* may not lead you anywhere
 and even if it does, the result may not be lasting.
 Only when the ego is crushed will the Divine flow out to you.

Enlightenment need not be sought
 through *mantras*, *yantras*, and *tantras*.

Just seek the blessing of the silent Lord within,
and even in a weak moment, you will derive strength
from the immanent Omnipresent.

Gopālakṛishṇa Bhārati, Aiye mattakkatinam; cf. in SSI3 pp.288–89

See also: **maṇḍala, Olī, swastika.**

1. See “yantra,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. For many of these details, see Georg Feuerstein, *Tantra, TPEF* pp.217–21; “shrī-yantra,” “yantra,” *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga*, EDYF.
3. Devdutt Pattanaik, “Tantrik Geometry,” *TITG*.
4. See “yantra,” *A to Z of Jainism*, AZJW.

yào, yàowù (C) *Lit.* medicine (yào); medicinal (yào) substance (wù); medication, drug; elixir, potion; metaphors used in the Daoist *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition, either for one’s real original and essential nature (*xìng*) – also called *xiānyào* (elixir of immortality) and *dàyào* (great medicine) – or for the various ‘medicines’ and ‘ingredients’ that are a part of *nèidān* philosophy and practice; used synonymously with *dān* (elixir).

The Daoist master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) describes some of the ways in which the metaphor has been misunderstood:

Medicine (*yàowù*) is a metaphor. Students of later generations took the alchemical books literally, and mistook the medicines (*yàowù*) for physical ones. So they gathered herbs in the mountains, making them into potions in the deluded hope of immortality. Some gathered five metals and eight minerals, fusing them into pills for consumption, in the unrealistic belief that they would be able to fly into the sky. Little did they know that physical medicines are only for physical ailments, and are useless for ailments of the formless. To cure spiritual ailments, there is no other method but to gather the inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*).

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

And again:

When the alchemical books and scriptures of the masters speak of gathering (*cǎiqǔ*) medicines (*yàowù*) and refining the gold elixir (*jīndān*), they are referring to inherent, formless and non-physical realities, not to medicines of this world with physical forms, nor to substances in the human body.

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

Master Gě Hóng (C4th) says that the “great medicine (*dàyào*)” is a great protection against the vicissitudes of life. Herbal and other such medicines can only alleviate physical ailments:

If one takes the great medicine (*dàyào*) of the gold elixir (*jīndān*), the hundred evils do not come near, even if one continues to live in the world. If one takes only herbs and plants and small pills of the eight minerals, one can only be cured of illness and lengthen one’s lifespan. This is because such preparations are insufficient to avert the calamities that come from without.

Gě Hóng, Bàopǔzǐ nèipīān 18, BNJM p.327, DZ1185, JY144; cf. in GCDP p.131

Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) understands “outer medicine (*wàiyào*)” to include various external practices such as physical exercises, good deeds, and so on. He observes that these may help to enhance one’s well-being, but only “inner medicine (*nèiyào*)” or spiritual practice can lead to recovery of one’s original, essential nature:

Outer medicine (*wàiyào*) is for curing diseases and prolonging life (*chángshēng*). Inner medicine (*nèiyào*) is for going from existence (*yǒu*) to nonexistence (*wú*).

Learning about the *Dào* generally begins with outer medicine (*wàiyào*); from that, people pass naturally to the study of inner medicine (*nèiyào*). By virtue of their merit from cultivation (in past lives), spiritually advanced human beings are born with knowledge, and thus begin with refinement of inner medicine (*nèiyào*) rather than starting with outer medicine (*wàiyào*).

The inner medicine (*nèiyào*) is non-doing (*wúwéi*), yet there is nothing that is not done (*wúbùwéi*). The outer medicine (*wàiyào*) is doing (*yǒuwéi*), and there are various ways of doing it.

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

Various aspects of *nèidān* commonly described as *yào* include the two medicinal ingredients of *yīn* and *yáng* – which must be harmonized or united in pursuit of spiritual realization – and the three superior medicines or three treasures (*sānbǎo*), viz. vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*). These three energies are refined, transformed and merged into one as the practitioner advances towards final spiritual realization:

The great medicines (*dàyào*) are of three kinds:

vital essence (*jīng*), life energy (*qì*), and spirit (*shén*).

Anything with form is not the original Reality (*běnlái zhēn*).

When utterly pure and utterly rarefied, these abstract spiritual things
are refined into the great adamantine spiritual body (*dàfǎshēn*).

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

Human beings are inherently immortal – not physically, but spiritually. The
“medicine (*yào*) of eternal life (*chángshēng*)” is within everybody, but as
master Zhāng Bódūān (C11th) laments, most people waste their lives:

Everyone inherently has the medicine (*yào*) of eternal life (*chángshēng*):
It is just that they have got lost along the way
and have discarded it in vain.

Zhāng Bódūān, Wúzhēn piān, DZ263

Master Lǐ Dàochún (C13th) likewise emphasizes that the path to the *Dào* is
universally available; but it will only be rediscovered when the attention is no
longer attracted by the “passing clouds” of the “passions” and worldly life:

Everyone already has the medicine (*yào*) of eternal life (*chángshēng*)
within themselves.
The method of *Dào* is implanted in them,
but they do not follow it.
Who can turn his attention within
when his eyes are dazzled by transient beauties?
Who can contemplate within
when his passions are drawn by passing clouds?

Lǐ Dàochún, Zhōnghé jí, DZ249, JY226

Master Liú Yīmíng says that the medicine which encompasses all other
medicines is the “great medicine (*dàyào*)” or gold elixir (*jīndān*) of one’s
original, intrinsic spiritual nature. This inherent nature is present within
every human being, though expert guidance is required in order to find it.
Liú Yīmíng differentiates between *zhēnzhī* (true knowledge), which refers
to the highest mystical or spiritual knowledge that arises from oneness with
the *Dào*, and *língzhī* (reflected knowledge), which is the diffused reflection
of *zhēnzhī* at all levels other than that of the *Dào* itself:

The great medicine (*dàyào*) of the gold elixir (*jīndān*) is inher-
ent in everyone; it already exists in every house (*i.e.* body). If you
meticulously study the true teaching, seek an enlightened teacher
(*míngshī*), know the two medicines (*yào*) of true knowledge (*zhēnzhī*)
and reflected knowledge (*língzhī*), and find the one opening (*qiào*)
of the mysterious pass (*xuánguān*) – then, without let or hindrance,

you will go straight to the other shore. In one day's work, you will attain the illuminating elixir (*dān*) of pure *yáng*. Why wait three years or nine years?

Líu Yīmíng, Wùzhēn zhízhǐ, ZW253, DS17

He also points out that the path to rediscovery of this “medicine” is essentially that of cultivating the “inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*) of the Void (*xū*)”. All the many *nèidān* metaphors relate to this primary practice, including to “gather medicine (*cǎiyào*)”, to “refine medicine (*liànyào*)”, and so on:

The way (*dào*) of (original) nature (*xìng*) and (true spiritual) life (*míng*) begins and ends with cultivation of the inherent (*xiāntiān*) one true Energy (*zhēnyī zhī qì*) of the Void (*xū*). There is nothing more. When you gather medicine (*cǎiyào*), you are gathering this. When you refine medicine (*liànyào*), you are refining this. When you restore the elixir (*huándān*), you are restoring this. When you free the elixir (*tuōdān*), you are freeing this. When you ingest the elixir (*fúdān*), you are ingesting this. When you develop the (spiritual) embryo (*jiētāi*), you are developing this.

Líu Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

To rediscover this “medicine” it is first necessary to purify and refine the “thinking spirit (*shíshén*, intellect)” and to concentrate the mind:

Turn your face upward and look at the sky. Moment by moment it changes, throughout the 365 days, yet the pivot of the Big Dipper (*i.e.* the North Star) remains motionless. Our mind is also like that. Our mind is like the North Star, and the myriad stars that revolve around it are energy (*qì*). The energy (*qì*) in our limbs and throughout our entire body forms an unobstructed network, requiring no effort (to make it function). Refine the thinking spirit (*shíshén*) in this manner; cut out and eliminate illusions and concepts, then the medicine (*yào*) will develop.

This medicine (*yào*) is not something physical. It is the light of your (original) nature (*xìng*), which is the inherent (*xiāntiān*) true Energy (*zhēnqì*). Yet it will only appear as a result of great stillness (*dàdìng*). . . . After it has appeared and has shown itself for a long time, then your state of mind will become illumined. Impurity will automatically be washed away. Then the mind will become empty, and you will be liberated from the ocean of dust (material existence).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 12, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

See also: **dān** (8.1), **jīng-qì-shén** (►1).

yasna (Av) *Lit.* offering; offering with prayers; worship, outer or inner; hence, meditation, contemplation, interior prayer and devotion, worship in the spirit; etymologically related to the Sanskrit *yagya* (sacrifice). The *Yasna* is also the Zoroastrian *Book of Worship*, a compilation of Zoroastrian literature written in the Avestan language, whose verses contain the oldest Zoroastrian writings, including the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra.

In these *Gāthās*, *yasna* seems to refer to interior or spiritual worship, since Zarathushtra nowhere mentions outward rituals or ceremonies:

Through deeds and words and worship (*yasna*),
do I bring to humanity immortality (*ameretatāt*) and Truth (*Asha*),
with spiritual Power (*Xshathra*) and perfection (*haurvatāt*).

Zarathushtra, Yasna 34:1; cf. DSZ

In one of his verses, Zarathushtra raises the question of how God is to be worshipped; but he seeks the answer from God, not from human traditions. What, he asks, is the divinely ordained, rather than the man-made, path of worship? The question, of course, is rhetorical, and he answers it himself. The way to worship God, he says, is through the *Vohu Manah*, the First Mind or Intelligence of the Divine, the divine power that forms and sustains creation:

What is Your command? What is Your will?
How should we praise and worship (*yasna*) You?
Give us, O *Mazdā*, Your instructions clear,
so that we may receive the blessings
promised by keeping Your command.
Lead us, through Your First Mind (*Vohu Manah*),
in the path of Truth and self-realization.

Zarathushtra, Yasna 34:12; cf. DSZ

As he repeats in the next verse, the path of true spiritual worship is that of all saviours. It is

the path of *Vohu Manah*, which You have revealed to me –
the religion (*daēna*) of the saviours (*saoshyant*).

Zarathushtra, Yasna 34:13; cf. DSZ

Even in later Zoroastrianism, the same creative power, as *Sraosha* – the inner Sound or Music, though the meaning is buried in the liturgy of external worship – is still heralded as the real means to worship God:

Let *Sraosha* be present here
 for the worship (*yasna*) of *Ahura Mazdā*,
 the most beneficent and holy.

Yasna 56:1; cf. SBE31 p.296

Worship, says Zarathushtra, is not something that is switched on and off at will; it requires effort and struggle. Yet, he says, it is the path followed by his devotees, among whom were included royalty and Frashoshtra, thought to have been his successor:

Let all seek to please *Mazdā*,
 striving in thought and word and deed,
 choosing the right way of worship (*yasna*).
 Royal Vishtaspa, devotee of Zarathushtra Spitama,
 and Frashoshtra, too, meditate on this path of holiness,
 the path revealed to our saviour (*saoshyant*) by *Ahura*.

Zarathushtra, Yasna 53:2; cf. DSZ

See also: **Sraosha** (3.1), **Vohu Manah** (3.1).

yātrā (S/Pa/H/Pu) *Lit.* festival, feast, fair, procession; journey, expedition, pilgrimage; also, a company of pilgrims; a religious play or theatre performance with a religious theme. More specifically, a *ratha-yātrā* refers to the procession at a religious fair or festival in which images of the principle deity or deities are carried through the streets on a chariot (*ratha*), which in modern times may be some form of highly decorated, motorized transport, usually to the accompaniment of music and a dancing display. A journey or pilgrimage to a holy place (*tīrtha*) is called a *tīrtha-yātrā*. Both *ratha-yātrās* and *tīrtha-yātrās* are prevalent aspects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. *Yātrā* is frequently used in a generic sense for either processions or pilgrimages.

Yātrās as religious processions and festivals have a number of factors in common between each other and across the various religious traditions, a number of which are mentioned in the Jain *Yātrā-vidhi-pañchāshaka* ('Collection of Fifty Festival Traditions', c.C6th CE). They are occasions when people give in charity (*dāna*); their performance may be accompanied by austerities (*tapas*), such as fasting or various dietary restrictions, in order to induce a proper frame of mind; people should dress nicely, wearing their best clothes, garlands, ornaments, ointments, and perfumes; music and songs (*gīta-vāditra*) should befit the occasion, designed to induce religious sentiments; hymns of praise (*stuti-stotra*) should be meaningful as well as impressive, creating a longing to leave the material world; and – in the Jain context – associated spectacles (*prekshanaka*) or dramatic performances, accompanied by dancing, should represent incidents from the lives of the

Jinas, such as their birth or renunciation of the world. A Jain *yātrā* includes a procession (*ratha-yātrā*) in which the image of a *Jina*, normally resident in the temple, together with pictures illustrating religious themes, are paraded through the streets of the city on a chariot (*ratha*), accompanied by music and dancing.¹

The *Yātrā-vidhi-pañchāshaka* makes no mention of *tīrtha-yātrās*, and it is possible that in those early times, long distance pilgrimages to sacred sites (*tīrthas*) were not customary among Jains. In present times, groups of Jain laypeople undertake organized *yātrās*, often in specially hired trains, the modern equivalent of the traditional caravan. It is believed that great merit accrues to the one who finances and organizes a *tīrtha-yātrā*. His merit is further enhanced if he erects an image of the *Jina* at the sacred place. Monks and nuns, having vowed to renounce all but the most basic of human necessities, undertake such journeys on foot, stopping at various less sacred sites along the way.

Buddhist and Hindu traditions have a similar array of *yātrās*, both as festivals and pilgrimages. Motivations will vary from person to person, but for the sincere seekers of a spiritual life, the intention will be to strengthen their devotion and spiritual practice. Others may believe that they will accrue merit or good *karma* by attending a *ratha-yātrā* or undertaking a *tīrtha-yātrā*. As in the Jain tradition, *tīrtha-yātrās* are generally made in organized groups, often large, which provide good business for dedicated travel companies taking pilgrims to the many established pilgrimage destinations.

See also: **tīrtha**.

1. *Yātrā-vidhi-pañchāshaka* 6–11, *YVPH*, in *JYMS* p.234.

Yawm al-Ākhir, al- (A) *Lit.* the Last (*Ākhir*) Day (*Yawm*); the Day of Resurrection or Day of Judgment; the end of the world, when the dead will rise from their graves, and be judged; a term commonly used in the *Qurʾān*, as in:¹

Jews, Christians, and Sabaeans, and those who believe (in the *Qurʾān*) – whoever believes in God and the Last Day (*Yawm al-Ākhir*) and works righteousness – shall have their reward with their Lord; they will have no fear or regret.

Qurʾān 2:62, *AYA*, *KPA*; cf. *Qurʾān* 5:69

Among the people, there are some who say: “We believe in God and the Last Day (*Yawm al-Ākhir*),” but they do not really believe. Willingly would they deceive *Allāh* and those who believe, but they only deceive themselves, and realize it not!

Qurʾān 2:8–9; cf. *AYA*

See also: **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

1. See also *Qur'ān* 2:126, 177, 228, 264; 3:114; 4:38–39, 59, 162; 5:69; 9:18–19, 29, 44–45, 99; 24:2; 29:36; 58:22; 60:6; 65:2.

Yawm al-Dīn, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Religion (*Dīn*); the Day of Judgment; also called the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*), the Hour (*al-Sā'ah*),¹ and by a number of other names the Day on which it is believed that the world will be rolled up like a scroll, the dead will rise from their graves, their limbs will testify to their good and evil deeds, and they will be judged on the scales of *Allāh*, upon which nothing, however apparently insignificant, is overlooked. According to the judgment of *Allāh*, the good and those who followed truth will enter paradise, while the bad will be consigned to hell. Mystically, the Day of Judgment is the day of a person's death, when the record of his or her deeds is judged.

The belief in a Day of Judgment has come into both Christianity and Islam from earlier Judaism. Before Judaism, a Last Judgment was also taught in Zoroastrianism, though the belief is absent from the extant writings of Zarathushtra himself.

There are many passages in the *Qur'ān* that speak of the end of the world and the Day of Judgment. The end is heralded by two blasts of a trumpet. At the first blast, the universe is thrown into chaos – mountains are turned to powder, the sky is cleft asunder, stars are scattered and dimmed, earth and heaven are rolled up and held in the Lord's hand (they appear very small), everybody swoons, and so on. At the second blast, the dead rise from their graves, and all are judged according to their deeds:

No just estimate have they made of God, such as is due to Him. On the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*), the whole earth will be in the palm of His hand, and the heavens will be rolled up in His right hand. Glory be to Him! Far is He above all the partners they associate with Him!

The trumpet will be sounded, when all that are in the heavens and on earth will fall down in a swoon, except such as it will please God to spare. Then the trumpet will be sounded a second time, and they will rise and gaze about them! And the earth will shine with the glory of its Lord. And the Book (record of deeds) will be laid open; the prophets and the witnesses will be brought in; and all shall be judged with fairness. And none shall be wronged. Every soul will be paid in full the fruit of its deeds; for He knows best all that they have done.

The unbelievers will be led to hell in crowds. Then, when they draw near, its gates will be opened, and its keepers will say to them,

“Did not messengers come to you from among yourselves, proclaiming to you the signs of your Lord, and forewarning you of this Day (*Yawm*)?”

And they will answer: “Yes.” And thus the promised scourge will fall upon the unbelievers. And they will be told: “Enter the gates of hell, to dwell therein forever.” And evil is this dwelling place of the arrogant!

And those who feared their Lord will be led to the garden (*al-jannah*, paradise) in crowds. Then, behold, when they draw near, its gates will be opened; and its keepers will say to them: “Peace be upon you! You have done well! Enter here, to dwell therein forever.”

And they will say: “Praise be to God, who has truly fulfilled His promise to us, and has given us this land as our heritage. We can dwell in this garden wherever we will. Blessed is the reward of the righteous!”

And you will see the angels circling around the Throne on all sides, singing praises to their Lord. They will be judged with fairness, and the cry on all sides shall be, “Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!”

Qur’ān 39:67–75; cf. AYA, KPA

In another description, written in similarly compelling imagery, the souls are shown the “record” of their deeds. Once again, the righteous enter the “garden”, while the sinners are sent into the “blazing fire”:

Then, when one blast is sounded on the trumpet, and the earth is moved, and its mountains, and they are crushed to powder at one stroke – and on that Day (*Yawm*) shall the Event come to pass. For on that Day (*Yawm*), the sky will be flimsy and will be rent asunder. And on that Day (*Yawm*), angels will be on all sides, and eight will bear the throne of your Lord above them. And on that Day (*Yawm*) you shall be brought to Judgment: no act of yours that you hide will be hidden.

Then he that receives the record of his deeds in his right hand will say: “Ah here! Read my record! I truly understood that my account would one day reach me!” And he will enter a life of bliss, in a garden (*al-jannah*) on high, the fruits whereof will hang in bunches, low and near. (And they will say to him:) “Eat and drink to your full satisfaction, because of the good that you sent before you, in days gone by!”

And he that receives the record of his deeds in his left hand, will say: “Ah, would that my record had not been given to me! And that I had never realized how my account stood! Ah, would that death had made an end of me! Of no profit to me was my wealth! I am bereft of all my power.”

And (the stern command will say): “Seize him, and bind him, and burn him in the blazing fire. Then fasten him with a chain, seventy cubits long! For he did not believe in God Most High and did not care

to the poor! So he has no friend here on this Day, nor has he any food but filth, which none but sinners eat.

So I call to witness what you see and what you see not, that this is verily the word of an honoured Messenger. It is not the word of a poet: little it is you believe! Nor is it the word of a soothsayer: little admonition it is you receive. (This is) a message sent down from the Lord of the worlds.

And if the Messenger were to invent any sayings in Our name, surely would We seize him by his right hand, and sever the artery of his heart, and not one of you could protect him. But verily this is a message for the godfearing. And We certainly know that there are among you those that reject it. But truly, revelation is a cause of sorrow for the unbelievers. But verily it is truth of assured certainty. So glorify the name of your Lord Most High.

Qur'ān 69:13–52; cf. AYA, KPA

In addition to these long descriptions, there are also shorter, equally graphic passages which describe the same events:

When the sky is torn,
 when the stars are scattered,
 when the seas boil over,
 when the tombs burst open –
 Then a person will know what she has given
 and what she has held back.
 O humankind, what has deluded you from your generous Lord.

Qur'ān 82:1–6, in EIM p.44

There is no doubt that the writer of these descriptions meant them literally, and most Muslim readers have taken them in that way too. In Sufism, however, the quest for eternity and the divine Essence is an inner journey, to be experienced in the here and now, something that seems an uncomfortable partner to the belief in a far-off Day of Judgment. It is true that some Sufis, such as Rūmī, indicated that the real resurrection was of the spirit from the “grave of the body”.² Others wrote of various levels of personal and spiritual resurrection, equating the highest resurrection, for example, with the annihilation (*fanā'*) or death of the ego in divine union.³

Sufi literature in general, however, seems content to accept the eschatological account of the *Qur'ān* at face value. But since a charge of heresy was punishable by death, it can be readily imagined that there was little incentive among Sufis to voice or even entertain any doubt they may have harboured concerning matters of their Muslim faith. Like the monks of all religions, whose ultimate quest is for the universal eternity within themselves, the traditions, beliefs and practices of their own religion remain a necessary framework and support to their spiritual endeavours.

See also: **Āvāz** (3.1), **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Qiyāmah**.

1. *Qur'ān* 30:55.
2. Rūmī, *Maṣnavī* I:1930–35; cf. *MJR2* p.105.
3. See **resurrection (in Islam)**.

Yawm al-Faṣl, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Severing (*Faṣl*); the Day of Sorting out; the Day of Judgment; an expression used in the *Qur'ān*.¹

Verily the Day of Sorting out (*Yawm al-Faṣl*) is a thing appointed,
the Day that the Trumpet shall be sounded,
and you shall come forth in crowds;
And the heavens shall be opened as if there were doors,
and the mountains shall vanish, as if they were a mirage.

Qur'ān 78:17–20; cf. *AYA*

The passage goes on to describe the horrors of hell reserved for the “transgressors”, and the “gardens” as the “fulfilment of desires” reserved for the “righteous”.²

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

1. See also *Qur'ān* 37:21, 77:13–14, 38.
2. *Qur'ān* 78:21–38.

Yawm al-Ḥaṣhr, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Assembly (*Ḥaṣhr*); the Day of Gathering; the end of the world when all the dead will rise from their graves and be assembled for judgment; the Day of Judgment; an expression drawn from the *Qur'ān*:

The Day (*Yawm*) when the earth will be rent asunder over them, men hurrying forth. To make a gathering (*ḥaṣhr*) of them all will be easy enough for Us.

Qur'ān 50:44; cf. *AYA*, *KPA*, *MGK*

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

Yawm al-Ḥisāb, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Reckoning (*Ḥisāb*); the end of the world, when all souls will be called to account for their deeds; the Day of Judgment; an expression derived from the *Qur'ān*, where it is said that no one will escape the final accounting:

O our Lord! Cover us with Your forgiveness –
 me, my parents and all believers,
 on the Day (*Yawm*) that the reckoning (*ḥisāb*)
 will be established!

Think not that God does not heed the deeds of those who do wrong.

Qurʾān 14:41–42; cf. AYA

Those who respond not to Him,
 even if they had all that is in the heavens and on earth,
 and as much more, in vain would they offer it for ransom.
 For them will the reckoning (*ḥisāb*) be terrible:
 their abode will be hell – what a bed of misery! ...

Those who join together those things
 that God has commanded to be joined,
 hold their Lord in awe,
 and fear the terrible reckoning (*ḥisāb*) – ...
 Gardens of perpetual bliss: they shall enter there.

Qurʾān 13:18, 21, 23; cf. AYA

The *Qurʾān* is warning that every deed, however small or seemingly insignificant, will be subject to a “reckoning”.

See also: **ḥisāb** (6.3), **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

Yawm al-Jamʿ, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Gathering (*Jamʿ*); the Day of Assembly; the Day of Judgment; an expression used in the *Qurʾān* for the end of the world when the dead will be called to account:

The Day (*Yawm*) that He assembles you all for a Day of Assembly (*Yawm al-Jamʿ*) – that will be a day of mutual loss and gain among you, and those who believe in God and work righteousness – He will take away from them their troubles, and He will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, to dwell therein forever: that will be the supreme achievement. But those who reject faith and treat Our signs as falsehoods, they will be companions of the fire, to dwell therein forever; and evil is that goal.

Qurʾān 64:9–10; cf. AYA

This have We sent to you, by inspiration, a *Qurʾān* in Arabic – that you may warn the mother of cities (*i.e.* Mecca) and all around her; warn (them) of the Day of Assembly (*Yawm al-Jamʿ*) of which there

is no doubt; when some will be in the garden (paradise), and some in the blazing fire.

Qur'ān 42:7; cf. AYA

See also: **resurrection (in Islam), al-Yawm al-Dīn.**

Yawm al-Khurūj, al- (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Exodus (*Khurūj*); the Day of Coming Forth (from the grave); the Day of Resurrection; the Day of Judgment; an expression used in the *Qur'ān*:

The Day (*Yawm*) when they will hear the cry in truth:
that is the Day of Coming Forth (*Yawm al-Khurūj*).

Qur'ān 50:42, MGK

See also: **resurrection (in Islam), al-Yawm al-Dīn.**

Yawm al-Qiyāmah, al- (A), **Rūz-i Qiyāmat (P)** *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of Resurrection (*Qiyāmah*); the Day of Judgment; *qiyāmah* carries a connotation of tumult, turmoil, upheaval, revolution, overthrow. It is related to *qiyām* (rising, getting up) and *iqāmah* (raising, lifting up).

Thus, the Day of Resurrection is portrayed as a day of great upheaval, when the bodies shall rise up from their graves. The expression is used frequently in the *Qur'ān*:¹

Man always denies what is before him, asking,
“When shall the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*) be?”
But when the sight is dazed,
and the moon is eclipsed,
and the sun and moon are brought together.
Upon that day, man shall say, “Where shall I flee?”
No indeed – there is no place of refuge!

Qur'ān 75:5–12; cf. AYA, KI

Every man's fate We have fastened about his neck:
On the Day of Resurrection (*Yawm al-Qiyāmah*),
We shall bring out for him a scroll,
which he will see spread open.

Qur'ān 17:13; cf. AYA

The *Qur'ān* speaks of the Day of Judgment by many names.² The most common are: *Yawm al-Qiyāmah* (Day of Resurrection, seventy times), *al-Sā'ah*

(the Hour, forty times), *Yawm al-Ākhir* (the Last Day, twenty times), *Yawm al-Dīn* (Day of Judgment, Day of Requit, fifteen times), *Yawm al-Faṣl* (Day of Decision, six times), and *Yawm al-Ḥisāb* (Day of Reckoning, five times). Other names include: *Yawm al-Faṭḥ* (Day of Judgment), *Yawm al-Talāq* (Day of Meeting), *Yawm al-Jamʿ* (Day of Gathering), *Yawm al-Khulūd* (Day of Abiding), *Yawm al-Khurūj* (Day of Coming Forth), *Yawm al-Baʿth* (Day of Resurrection), *Yawm al-Ḥasrah* (Day of Regret), *Yawm al-Tanād* (Day of Calling Forth), *Yawm al-Āzifah* (Day that Draws Near), *Yawm al-Waʿid* (Day of which Warning has been given), and *Yawm al-Taghābun* (Day of Loss and Gain, Day of Mutual Blaming).

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

1. See e.g. *Qurʾān* 2:174, 212, 3:55, 22:9, 46:5, 75:1, 6, *passim*.
2. See e.g. *Qurʾān* 30:56 (*Yawm al-Baʿth*), 35:9 (*al-Nushūr*, the Resurrection), 37:144 (*Yawm al-Baʿth*), 50:11 (*al-Khurūj*, the Resurrection), 50:42 (*Yawm al-Khurūj*), 67:15 (*al-Nushūr*), 22:5 (*al-Baʿth*, raising the dead to life) 25:40, 47 (*Nushūr*), 30:7 (*al-ākhirah*, the hereafter), *passim*.

Yawm al-Waʿid, **al-** (A) *Lit.* the Day (*Yawm*) of which Warning (*Waʿid*) (has been given);¹ the Day of Judgment.

See also: **resurrection (in Islam)**, **al-Yawm al-Dīn**.

1. *Qurʾān* 50:20.

yín'é (C) *Lit.* to chant, to recite rhythmically. See **sòng**.

Yom Kippur (He) *Lit.* Day (*Yom*) of Atonement (*Kippur*). The holiest day of the Jewish religious year, *Yom Kippur* is the culmination of the 'ten days of awe (*yamim nora'im*)', which begin with *Rosh Hashanah*, the Jewish New Year.

According to tradition, as written in the *Mishnah*,¹ God inscribes each person's judgment for the coming year into one of three books: if a person is righteous, he is inscribed in the Book of Life; if a person has indulged in evil, his destiny is sealed – as the *Mishnah* says, quoting the *Psalms*, “blotted out of the Book of Life forever”;² and if a person has been intermediate in his behaviour, then he has ten days in which to repent for his sins and join those inscribed in the Book of Life. True repentance is called *teshuvah* (return). A harsh judgment can be cancelled if God is approached in an attitude of true *teshuvah*. The books are opened on *Rosh Hashanah* and sealed on *Yom*

Kippur. *Yom Kippur* is also called *Yom ha-Din* ('Day of Judgment) and *Yom ha-Zikaron* (Day of Remembrance).

Traditionally, in preparation for the Day of Atonement, individuals approach friends and family members and ask forgiveness for any sins they have committed against them during the previous year. Confession (*viduy*) is considered an important aspect of any sincere atonement. They must put their feelings into words and beg forgiveness, both from their fellow human beings (if a sin against another), and from God. For transgressions against God, the Day of Atonement can atone; but for transgressions of one human being against another, the Day of Atonement does not atone until they have made peace with each other.

It is believed that on this day, many centuries ago (c.1300 BCE), God forgave the Israelites for the sin of worshipping the golden calf at the foot of Mt Sinai, an event described in *Exodus*.³

Yom Kippur is observed as a complete fast day, with no food or water for an entire period of twenty-four hours. It begins, like the Sabbath, on the evening before, and ends on the night of the day itself. The faithful are supposed to attend synagogue services for the entire day, remaining engaged in prayer and repentance. It is sometimes referred to as the 'Sabbath of Sabbaths'.

The opening prayer of the *Yom Kippur* service is called *Kol Nidrei* ('All Vows'). It is a declaration of absolution from all vows and promises made during the year. This prayer was written at a time when Jews were forced to convert to Christianity; the declaration was made to absolve them before God of any vows they had made.

The closing service of *Yom Kippur*, regarded as the holiest sequence of prayers during the year, is the *Ne'ilah*. It means 'locking' or 'closing', and refers to the closing of the gates of heaven at the end of the holy day.

Traditionally, a sequence of blasts from the *shofar*, a musical instrument made from a ram's horn, is blown at particular moments during synagogue services on *Rosh Hashanah* and also at the end of *Yom Kippur*. The traditional sequence of blasts is: *teki'ah* – one long, straight blast; *shevarim* – three medium wailing sounds; *teru'ah* – nine quick blasts in short succession; *teki'ah gadolah* – one extra-long blast. The *shofar* is frequently mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, as well as the *Talmud* and rabbinic literature. According to *Exodus*, during *Yahweh's* revelation to Moses on Mt Sinai, a long blast of the *shofar* resounded from the smoke-enveloped mountain, causing the assembled Israelites to tremble in awe.⁴

The medieval *Zohar* explains that the sounding of the *shofar* represents the relationship between the two *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) of Judgment (*Din*) and Mercy (*Hesed*). Because everything on this physical plane is regarded as a reflection of the higher spiritual (supernal) level where subtle powers are active, the *Zohar* proposes that the *shofar* awakens the quality of Mercy in the Divine so that Judgment may be mitigated:

Rabbi Abba, as he was once studying with Rabbi Simeon, said to him: “Many times have I enquired concerning the significance of the *shofar*, but I have never yet received a satisfactory answer.”

Rabbi Simeon replied: “The true explanation . . . why Israel have to use a ram’s horn (*shofar*) on this day and not any other is this, that we know to what place the horn belongs, and we do not desire to awaken Judgment. For, as we have learnt, by word and deed we have to awaken secret powers. Now when the supernal *shofar*, in which is the illumination of all, removes itself and does not shine upon the sons, then Judgment is awakened and the thrones are set up for Judgment, and Isaac (symbolically, the divine Judge) strengthens and prepares himself for Judgment.

“But when this *shofar* rouses itself, and men repent of their sins, it behoves them to blow the *shofar* below (on earth), and the sound thereof ascends on high and awakens another, supernal *shofar*, and so Mercy is awakened and Judgment is removed. We must produce from this *shofar* below various sounds to arouse all the voices that are contained in the supernal *shofar*, and therefore we not only use the *shofar* on this day, but arrange the blasts in a number of series.

“All punishments are kept in check, and Mercy is awakened. This is the purpose which these blasts should serve, being accompanied by repentance before God.

“Thus when Israel produce the blasts of the *shofar* with proper devotion, the supernal *shofar* returns and crowns Jacob (symbolically, God) so that all is properly arranged. Another throne is set up and joy is universally diffused, and God has mercy on the world. Happy are Israel who know how to divert their Master from Justice to Mercy.”

Zohar 3:99a–100b, ZSS5 p.125

See also: **Book of Life** (7.4), **fasting**, **Rosh Hashanah**, **shofar** (3.2).

1. *Mishnah, Tractate Rosh Hashanah* 1:2.
2. *Psalms* 69:28.
3. *Exodus* 32:28.
4. *Exodus* 19:13, 16–19, 20:18.

ẓāhir (A/P) *Lit.* outward; outer, external, manifest, exoteric; from *ẓahara* (to be or to become visible, perceptible, distinct, manifest); hence, visible, obvious, conspicuous, manifest; also as *al-ẓāhir* (the outward, the external, the manifest), a term also used as a name of God¹ in the sense that nothing exists except *Allāh* – everything has its being and subsistence in Him; also used in terms such as *ādāb al-ẓāhir* (rules of external discipline), *ẓāhiriyyān*

(externalists, followers of external form; sg. *zāhirī*), *ahl al-zāhir* (people of the external, externalists), and so on; commonly contrasted with *bāṭin* (inward, inner, esoteric, mystic).

Zāhir refers to the literal meaning or external sense of something. Theologians and intellectuals who promote the external view of religion are sometimes called '*ulamā*' *al-zāhir* (knowers of the external). They are the scholars of the *Qur'ān*, the *sharī'ah* and the *Sunnah*, whose field of study is outer knowledge ('*ilm al-zāhir*'). Distinguished from them are the mystics or true Sufis, designated '*ulamā*' *al-bāṭin* (knowers of the internal), who understand the inner meaning of the *Qur'ān* and Islamic religious law, and have inner knowledge ('*ilm al-bāṭin*') or experience.² '*Ulamā*' means scholars or authorities in religious or spiritual matters, and has no real English equivalent.

The meaning of *zāhir* includes not only matter as opposed to spirit, and phenomenal forms as opposed to Reality, but also external religious rituals, observances and liturgies, as well as the social code of conduct, and so on. It is contrasted with the inner mystic experience that transcends the cultural limitations of any religion. The *sharī'ah* (Islamic law), therefore, pertains to *al-zāhir*. The *ṭarīqah* (path) is the path from *al-zāhir* to *al-bāṭin* (the outer to the inner); while *ma'rīfah* (gnosis) pertains entirely to *al-bāṭin*. Hence, Sufis use the term *ahl al-zāhir* (externalists) for those who are tied to external religious observances, as opposed to mystics, *ahl al-bāṭin* (people of the inner; esotericists).

Although many Sufis adhered to the Islamic religious law (*sharī'ah*) and its external observances, there were also those who did not, and there was considerable debate between the two groups, each convinced of their own viewpoint. Ibn al-'Arabī maintains that those *shaykhs* who "do not preserve the outward (*al-zāhir*)" should not be followed, even if they are able to perform miracles. The "miraculous breaking of habit" means to sidestep the natural laws governing the created universe by performing miracles:

The second group of *shaykhs* are the possessors of (mystical) states. They have a certain dispersion (*tabdīd*) and do not preserve the outward (*al-zāhir*) in the way that the first group does. Their (mystical) states are acknowledged, but one should not become their companion. If the miraculous breaking of habit, that may become manifest from them, should become manifest, it is not to be relied upon, because of the discourtesy toward the (Islamic) law. For we have no way to God except that which He has laid down for us as the law. He who says there is another way to God, different from what He has laid down in the law, has spoken falsehood (*ẓūr*). So a *shaykh* who has no courtesy is not to be taken as a guide, even if he is truthful in his (mystical) state. However, reverence should be shown to him.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:364.28, FMIA3 (2:181) p.548, SPK pp.272–73

Abū Saʿīd al-Khayr, on the other hand, relates a story in which he is reprimanded for not having completely discarded external forms and knowledge (*ilm-i ẓāhir*). While travelling, Abū Saʿīd and his companions are spending the night in a mosque, where they meet with a fellow follower on the spiritual path:

“After we had done,” said Abū Saʿīd, “he asked whether any of us could answer a question. My friends pointed to me. He then said, ‘What is the duty of a slave, and what is the duty of a labourer for hire?’

“I replied in terms of the religious law. He asked, ‘Is there nothing else?’ I remained silent.

“With a stern look he exclaimed, ‘Do not live with one whom you have divorced.’ Meaning that since I had discarded exoteric knowledge (*ilm-i ẓāhir*; i.e. the religious law), I must have no further dealings with it. Then he added, ‘Until you are free (from self), you will never be a slave (of God), and until you are an honest and sincere labourer, you will never receive the wages of everlasting bliss.’”

Muḥammad ibn al-Munawwar, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATS1 p.42; cf. in SIM p.20

According to the story:

Abū Saʿīd immediately abandoned the study of theology and jurisprudence in which he had spent so much of his youth. He collected all the volumes that he had read, together with his own notebooks, buried them, and erected over them a mound of stone and earth. On this mound, he planted a twig of myrtle, which took root and put forth leaves, and in the course of time became a large tree. The people of Mayhana used to pluck boughs from it, hoping thereby to win a blessing for their newborn children, or in order to lay them on their dead before interment. The author of the *Asrār*, who had often seen it and admired its beautiful foliage, says that it was destroyed, with other relics of the saint, during the invasion of Khurāsān by Ghuzz.

R.A. Nicholson, from Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATS1 p.42, in SIM p.20

Sufis, like many other mystics and mystically minded people, have pointed out that there is an inward and an outward dimension to everything. There is outer purification (*ṭahārat al-ẓāhir*), which involves cleanliness of the body; and there is inner purification (*ṭahārat al-bāṭin*), which includes cleansing of the “heart from what is immoral”, and of the “innermost consciousness from that which is other than God”.³

There is an outer charity or almsgiving (*zakāt al-ẓāhir*), which helps in developing humility and love; but there is an inner *zakāh* (*zakāt al-bāṭin*), in which one’s own self or ego is completely surrendered in love.⁴

There is the outer pilgrimage (*hajj al-zāhir*) to the outer *Ka'bah* (*Ka'bah al-zāhir*) of stone; but there is the inner pilgrimage (*hajj al-bāṭin*), travelling the path to the inner *Ka'bah* (*Ka'bah al-bāṭin*) of the divine Essence.⁵

Likewise, speaking of spiritual effort, Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

There is an outward (*zāhir*) practice, which is everything connected to the bodily parts, and an inward (*bāṭin*) practice, which is everything connected to the soul (*nafs*).

Ibn al-ʿArabī, Meccan Revelations 2:559.20, FMIA4 (3:260) p.282, SPK p.152

There is also outer prophecy (*nubuwwat al-zāhirah*) and inner prophecy (*nubuwwat al-bāṭinah*), prophecy in this context being religious and spiritual teachings and instruction. The former is the province of those who teach religious law (*sharīʿah*); the latter belongs to the “friends of God”.⁶

There was the outer emigration (*hijrat al-zāhir*), when Muḥammad fled to Madīnah in 622 to escape persecution; and there is the inner emigration (*hijrat al-bāṭin*), the flight from this world to the “house of heart” within to escape the “turmoil of the *nafs*”.⁷

There is the servant of the outer (*ʿabd al-zāhir*), who is faithful in the performance of good works, leading a pious and good life, urging others towards human perfection; and there is the servant of the inner (*ʿabd al-bāṭin*), who practises inner devotion of the heart to God.⁸

There is the outer realm (*ʿālam al-zāhir*) of the material world, also called the realm of sovereignty (*ʿālam al-mulk*), the visible world (*ʿālam al-shahādah*), the realm of Works (*ʿālam al-Āthār*), the realm of creation (*ʿālam al-khalq*), and the realm of the senses (*ʿālam al-maḥsūsah*).

And there is the inner realm (*ʿālam al-bāṭin*), also known as the realm of spirits (*ʿālam al-arwāḥ*), the realm of Acts (*ʿālam al-Afʿāl*), the realm of the Command (*ʿālam al-Amr*), the realm of divinity (*ʿālam al-rubūbīyah*), and the realm of the Unseen (*ʿālam al-Ghayb*).⁹

Sufis have also said that since God is above all duality, all distinctions between the internal (*bāṭin*) and the external (*zāhir*) ultimately disappear. Thus Hujwīrī writes:

ʿAlī ibn Bundār al-Ṣayrafi of Nīshāpūr said: “Sufism is this – that the *ṣūfī* should not regard his own exterior (*zāhir*) and interior (*bāṭin*), but should regard all as belonging to God.” Thus, if you look at the exterior (*zāhir*), you will find an outward sign of God’s blessing and, as you look, you will see that outward actions do not even have the weight of a gnat’s wing beside the blessing of God, and you will cease from regarding the exterior (*zāhir*). Again, if you look at the interior (*bāṭin*), you will find an inward sign of God’s aid, and, as you look, you will see that inward actions will not turn the scale by a single grain in

comparison to the aid of God, and you will cease from regarding the interior (*bāṭin*). Then you will see that all belongs to God. And when you see that all is God's, you will see that you yourself have nothing.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Mahjūb III, KMM p.46; cf. KM p.41

See also: **bāṭin** (8.5), **sharīʿah**, **ṭarīqah** (►4), **al-Zāhir** (2.1).

1. *Qurʾān* 57:3.
2. Maḥmūd Qāshānī, *Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah*, *MHK* p.62, in *SSE6* p.73, in *SSE9* p.129; Kharaqānī, in *Tadhkirat al-Awliyāʾ* 1, *TAN2* pp.234–35, in *SSE9* p.129.
3. Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, *KA3* p.46; cf. in *SSE3* p.78.
4. Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī, *Rasāʾil*, *RNV3* p.322, in *SSE3* p.97.
5. Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, *KA1* p.551, in *SSE3* pp.100–1; Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī, *Rasāʾil*, *RNV1* p.54, in *SSE3* pp.104–5.
6. Ibn al-ʿArabī, in *al-Muʿjam al-Ṣūfī* 596, *AMAS* p.1050, in *SSE3* pp.64–65.
7. Maybudī, *Kashf al-Asrār*, *KA6* p.407, in *SSE5* pp.105–6.
8. Shāh Niʿmat Allāh Valī, *Rasāʾil*, *RNV4* p.119, in *SSE7* pp.126–27.
9. E.g. Lāhijī, *Sharḥ-i Gulshan-i Rāz*, *SGR* p.132; cf. in *SSE4* pp.118–19.

zhāi (C) *Lit.* to fast or to abstain (from meat, wine, etc.); hence a Daoist retreat ritual that includes fasting or dietary abstentions; also a Buddhist-style vegetarian diet. The same Chinese character *zhāi* also means ‘to give alms to a monk’, and additionally ‘a study room’, and hence refers to a Daoist meditation room.

Stemming from the concept of repentance, and involving various abstentions and purifications, a *zhāi* ritual is performed in order to obtain the benefits of purification or redemption of one's sins:

In its most basic definition, *zhāi* refers to purificatory prohibitions observed for rituals and festivals of all kinds. This usage of the word *zhāi* predates the origins of the Daoist religion, as such purificatory prohibitions had long been customary in Chinese official and popular religion. In Daoism, the word *zhāi* retained this basic meaning, but also came to denote the rituals and festivals themselves. Because ritual prohibitions typically included dietary restrictions, it also came about that, when Buddhism began to spread through China, the word *zhāi* was used to translate the Sanskrit word *uposhadha*, which denotes the monastic Buddhist practice of fasting after the noon hour. The usage of the word was further expanded to describe the vegetarian food eaten by monks, of which laypeople also partook on special occasions.

Stephen Eskildsen, Asceticism in Early Taoist Religion, AETR p.112

In most cases, the *zhāi* ritual comprises a recitation of sins confessed, followed by presentation to the deities of a document advising them of the merits accrued by the supplicant since the previous repentance. Today, the *zhāi* ritual is not performed independently. Instead, it forms the first part of the *jiào* (offering) ritual, in which the deities are thanked and given offerings such as cakes and fresh fruit.

See also: **jiào, xīnzhāi** (8.5).

zì (C) *Lit.* a style or courtesy name; an adult name, traditionally given to a young man on reaching the age of twenty years. As a symbol of adulthood, a *zì* would replace the boy's given name (*míng*). This ancient tradition had its beginnings in the *Shāng* dynasty (c.1600–1046 BCE), slowly developing into a system and becoming widespread during the succeeding *Zhōu* dynasty (c.1046–256 BCE). In earlier times, the *zì* was chosen by guests of honour at the capping ceremony (celebrating the boy's attainment of adulthood) or by the young man's first personal teacher. In later times, the *zì* was chosen either by a mentor or friend, or even by the young man himself, though not normally by his father or elder brother. A *zì* was sometimes given to a girl upon becoming marriageable at the age of fifteen.

A *zì* is a respectful form of address. According to the Confucian *Lǐjì* ('Book of Rites'; of uncertain date, but at least several centuries BCE), it is disrespectful for younger people to address an adult by his given name (*míng*), especially in formal situations or in writing – hence, the use of the *zì* as a courtesy name. While elders and superiors usually use the given name, they may also use the *zì* as a sign of affection, respect, or refinement. It is not appropriate to refer to oneself by one's *zì*, or to be addressed with one's *zì* by one's father or grandfather.

The *zì* – which usually comprises two characters – may be similar to or the opposite of the given name, or may express the bearer's virtues or religious belief. While the given name (*míng*) will always remain the same, one may receive different style names as one progresses through life. Examples of *zì* include:

Lǐ Ěr (personal name) – known by his honorific title Lǎozǐ (Lao Tzu), and his *zì* Bóyáng ('Senior Yáng')

Kǒng Qiū (personal name) – known by his honorific title Kǒngzǐ or Kǒngfūzǐ (Confucius), and his *zì* Zhòngní ('Second Son at Mount Ní')

Zhuāng Zhōu (personal name) – known by his honorific title Zhuāngzǐ (Chuang Tzu), and his *zì* Zìxiū ('Man of Ceasing')

Sūn Wǔ (personal name) – known by his honorific title Sūnzǐ (Sun Tzu), and his zì Zhǎngqīng (‘Highest Commander’)

Despite already having one or more zì, a Daoist disciple usually assumes a Daoist zì – known as a *dàohào* (Daoist name). Additionally or alternatively a monastic disciple may receive a *fǎhào* (religious name). The latter usually indicates the Daoist sect or lineage to which the disciple belongs, as well as the name of his master.

See also: **dàohào**, **fǎhào**.

Zìyyon (He) *Lit.* marker or monument; derived from the name of an ancient Jebusite fortress; commonly anglicized as Zion; used throughout the Bible to designate one of the mountains of Jerusalem; used symbolically for the Israelites themselves. Since ‘mountain’ is a common metaphor for the spiritual heights attained in meditation, Har Zìyyon (‘Mountain of Zion’) is also used to symbolize the inner ascent:

Upon Mount Zìyyon there shall be deliverance and there shall be holiness (*kodesh*); and the house of Jacob shall inherit their own heritage.

Obadiah 1:17; cf. KB

Many biblical passages maintain that the Lord dwells on Mount Zìyyon. Symbolically, it refers to God who ‘dwells’ in the spiritual heights, likened to a mountain or hill, as in “Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion (*Zamru le-Yahweh, yoshev be-Zìyyon*).”¹

See also: **holy mount** (2.1).

1. *Psalms 9:11; cf. KJV.*

zìzé (C) *Lit.* to blame or reproach (*zé*) oneself (*zì*); self-reproach. See **chéngfù**.

zōng, **zōngpài** (C) *Lit.* a sect, school, religious or spiritual lineage in Daoism and Chinese Buddhism; sometimes abbreviated as *pài*.

zunnār (A/P) *Lit.* cincture, girdle, waistband, belt, thread; a wide, braided cloth belt that Christians in Muslim countries were once required to wear; hence, a badge of infidelity; also, the Muslim name for the sacred thread of both

Zoroastrians and Indian *brāhmaṇs*; also the cord belt worn by Sufis around their cloaks. Using the term as a symbol of infidelity to the divine beloved, Sa'dī writes:

You have not given up life (phenomenal existence),
 yet still you long for the beloved.
 You have not severed the infidel's thread (*zunnār*),
 yet still you desire the true faith.
 At the palace gate (of the Divine),
 where the kettledrums of inaccessibility are beaten,
 you are not so much as an ant,
 yet still you yearn for the kingdom of Solomon.
 You are not even a man, nor have you rendered manly service,
 yet still you hanker after the row of benches reserved for perfect men.

Sa'dī, Tayyibāt 42:1–3, KSSS p.251; cf. TOS pp.59–60

In Sufi poetry, the *zunnār* bears two contrary meanings. On the one hand, from its association with Zoroastrianism and Christianity, it is an emblem of dualism and infidelity. On the other, it represents the seeker's pledge of service, obedience and devotion to God and the master by which union with the Divine is attained:¹

The cincture (*zunnār*) stands for the strength and steadfastness of the devotee in spiritual practice and servanthood (*'ubūdīyat*), and for persistence in service.

Bākharzī, Awrād al-Aḥbāb wa Fuṣūṣ al-Ādāb, AAF2 p.245, in SSE3 p.239

As 'Ināyat Khān explains, the *zunnār* signifies that man is a servant of God and has a duty towards Him:

This custom has been observed by Zoroastrians from the beginning of their religion, for Zarathushtra himself wore this sacred thread, and it is still seen today among the Parsees, even though they left Persia, their original land, ages ago.... The moral of *zunnār* is service. A soldier, a policeman, a postman or a gatekeeper, when on duty has a belt on, which expresses that he is on duty – not free to do everything he wishes, but only that for which he is appointed.... As a man is apt to forget all that is not in his immediate interests, the loosening and tying of the thread reminds him of his duty....

The idea is that we are all servants of God.... But the mystical meaning of *zunnār* is still greater, for the vertical figure of a man against the horizontally worn *zunnār* forms a cross. This means, as the Sufi understands it, self-denial: 'I' am not. When that first 'I', the

false ‘I’, is thus denied, then the next ‘I’, which is the real ‘I’, awakens, and God himself realizes His Being, and accomplishes thereby the purpose of creation.

‘Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK9 p.177

However, much depends upon the context, for the two meanings are not always clearly distinguished, especially since one of the epithets of a spiritual master in Sufi poetry is the “magian” (a Zoroastrian priest). Sanā’ī, for example, entreats his master (the “magian”) for the grace of obedience so that he may attain divine union, for he has relinquished the outer forms of religion:

I pray you, O magian,
 tie the cincture (*zunnār*) around me;
 For I have put away the rosary from my hand
 and the prayer carpet from my shoulder.
Sanā’ī, Dīvān 166, AMM p.360; cf. in SSE3 pp.237–38

Moreover, the Sufis often spoke of hiding a *zunnār* beneath their patched cloak, implying that they were hiding their true ‘religion’, which could have been construed as infidelity by the Muslim orthodoxy. Here, the badge of infidelity is also the emblem of an obedient traveller on the Sufi path:

Some day I shall throw off this patched cloak,
 so that all people may know
 that there is an infidel’s sacred thread (*zunnār*) beneath it.
Sa’dī, Tayyibāt 92:9, KSSS p.263; cf. TOS p.130

The patched “woollen cloak (*khirqah-i pashmīnah*)” of the Sufi was also seen as a symbol of hypocrisy. Thus, Ḥāfiẓ, identifying himself with the struggling seeker, implies humbly that he is an infidel, one who is not completely sincere on the spiritual path:

Ḥāfiẓ, you will see
 what this woollen cloak (*khirqah-i pashmīnah*) means tomorrow,
 when they untie the cincture (*zunnār*),
 you deceitfully wear beneath it.
Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.56, DIH p.124; cf. DHWC (188:7) p.358, in SSE3 p.238

Elsewhere, however, Ḥāfiẓ also says that he has exchanged his hypocrisy – symbolized by his Sufi cloak (*khirqah*) – for divine love (“wine”), a master (“minstrel”), and obedience (“cincture”) to him:

A cloak (*dalaq*) I wore
 concealed a hundred faults of mine;
 I pawned my cloak (*khirqat*) for wine and the minstrel:
 then only the cincture (*zunnār*) remained.

Ḥāfiẓ, Dīvān, DHA p.120, DIH p.212; cf. DHWC (177:3) p.341; cf. in SSE5 p.32

‘Aṭṭār says much the same:

Our master joined those people,
 took off his patched garment (*muraqqaʿ*)
 and tied on the cincture (*zunnār*).

‘Aṭṭār, Dīvān 23:1869, DASN p.109, in SSE5 p.30

Sufis often had to speak of mystic truths in a carefully veiled language. The practice of *kitmān* (deliberate concealment) referred in part to the careful and veiled wording and imagery they employed, often possessing double meanings. The intention was for their writings to be read with one meaning by the external followers of Islam, the *‘ulamā’s* (scholars) and the *qāḍīs* (administrators of Islamic law), while simultaneously conveying a different meaning to the mystics.

Amīr Khusraw (1253–1325), writing in medieval Delhi and probably speaking of the sacred thread of high-caste Indians, simply says that, through the influence of divine love, he has risen above all such externals:

Love has made me a *kāfir* (infidel):
 I do not need Islam.
 Every vein of mine has become a thread (*tār*)
 so neither do I need this sacred thread (*zunnār*).

Amīr Khusraw, Dīvān, in SBE pp.51, 374 (n.106)

See also: **khirqah, muraqqaʿ, upanayana.**

1. See also *Mirʿāt-i ‘Ushshāq*, in *TAT* p.203, in *SSE3* p.239; Tahānawī, *Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIFT4* p.442, in *SSE3* p.239.

8.5 SPIRITUAL PRACTICES

MYSTICS HAVE ALL AGREED THAT GOD OR THE SUPREME REALITY, as well as a range of intermediate levels or dimensions of being, are to be found within. Over the course of time, mystics and spiritual aspirants of various degrees have devised numerous practices designed to give the practitioner experience of the many levels and aspects of the inner reality. A common feature of all but a few of these techniques is the need to control the human mind. Descriptions of these esoteric or spiritual practices form the basis of this section.

abhibhāyatana (S/Pa), **zil gyis gnon pa'i skye mched** (T), **shēngchù** (C), **shōsho** (J)
Lit. overcoming (*abhibhava*, *zil gyis gnon*, *shēng*) + sphere (*āyatana*, *skye mched*, *chù*); sphere of mastery, sphere of transcendence, base for transcendence; transcendence of the sense organs; meditational exercises designed to control the senses; specifically, the eight masteries or fields of mastery (Pa. *aṭṭha-abhibhāyatanāni*).

The eight *abhibhāyatanas* are eight exercises first mentioned in the Pali *suttas* that are similar or identical to exercises that use *kaṣiṇas* (external objects) such as earth, water, colours and light as objects on which to focus the attention. Described in a somewhat obscure manner, the intended meaning remains unclear, and various interpretations exist. The standard description reads:¹

There are eight stages of mastery (*aṭṭha-abhibhāyatanāni*). What are they? When someone, perceiving forms internally, sees small forms, beautiful or ugly, external to himself, and having mastered them is aware that he perceives and knows them as they are – this is the first field of mastery (*abhibhāyatana*).

Dīgha Nikāya 16, Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, PTS2 p.110; cf. DNVS, TBLD p.249

The possibilities are then elaborated to include “perceiving . . . large forms”, “not perceiving small forms”, “not perceiving large forms”, “perceiving forms external to himself that are blue, . . . yellow, . . . red, . . . white, and mastering them, is aware that he perceives and knows them as they are – this is the eighth field of mastery (*abhibhāyatana*)”.

In the commentarial literature,² the exercises are presumed to bear a resemblance to *kaṣiṇa* exercises in which the meditator focuses on an object, forms a mental image (*uggaha nimitta*) of it in his mind, and meditates on this image until it becomes a self-sustaining and self-luminous counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). The threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) thus cultivated leads on to *appanā samādhi* (fixed concentration) and entry into the first and subsequent *jhānas* (stages of meditative absorption). The last four exercises, in which a coloured object is made the focus of meditation, are seemingly the same as the coloured *kaṣiṇa* meditations. The first four are more obscure and possibly relate to either taking some mark on the body or the colour of some internal part of the body as a *kaṣiṇa* – blood being red, bones and teeth being white, for example.

See also: **kaṣiṇa**.

1. See also *e.g.* *Majjhima Nikāya* 77, *Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta*, *PTSM2* pp.13–14.
2. *E.g.* *Dhammasaṅgaṇī* 204–47; *Aṭṭhasālinī* 187–90; see also Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* 34, *T25* 1509:216a–b, *TVW3* pp.1064–68.

abhyās(a) (S/H) *Lit.* practice, conduct; repeated activity, repeated exercises, persistent effort; as in *yogābhyāsa* (practice of *yoga*, especially *aṣṭāṅga yoga*) and *Shabd abhyās* (practice of the Word); also, study, as in *śāstra-abhyāsa* (study of the scriptures); mystically, spiritual practice; hence, *abhyāsī*, one who performs spiritual practice.

Abhyās can be external or internal. *Antarmukh abhyās* (inner-facing practice), meaning spiritual practice or meditation, is hence contrasted with *bāharmukh abhyās* (outer-facing practice), such as religious rituals and so on. For spiritual growth, internal practices are required. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh introduces one of his *shabds* (poems):

This is a warning (*chetāvanī*) to *jīvas*. Not through religious rituals (*karm*) and observances (*dharm*) under the dictates of the mind, or repetition (*jap*) and penances (*tap*), or idol worship (*mūrti pūjā*), pilgrimages (*tīrth*) and fasts (*vrāt*) will *jīvas* be freed from the cycle of eighty four (*chaurāsī*) – not unless and until they associate (*sang*) with a saint (*sādh*) or perfect master (*satguru*), receive from him the secret of the Name (*Nām*), and do the inner practice (*antarmukh abhyās*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sār Bachan Poetry* 38:3, *SBP* p.336

Whatever the time or place, the basic problem that faces all practitioners has always been the same – control of the mind. As Arjuna complains to Kṛishṇa in the *Bhagavad Gītā*, his attempts at meditation are disturbed by his restless mind:

Due to the constant restlessness of my mind,
I do not experience firm establishment in *yoga*
through the cultivation of balance,
in the way you have instructed.

Truly, O Kṛishṇa, my mind is restless (*chañchala*),
turbulent, unyielding, and strong.
To control it, I think,
is more difficult than controlling the wind.

Bhagavad Gītā 6:33–34

Kṛishṇa agrees that the mind is restless. But, he says, by *abhyāsa*, by repeated practice, it can be brought under control:

O mighty-armed one!
Undoubtedly, the mind is restless
and difficult to control.
Yet, O son of Kuntī,

it can be brought under control
by dispassion and by spiritual practice (*abhyāsa*).

My understanding is that a man of uncontrolled mind
finds *yoga* difficult to attain.
But a man who has his mind under control,
by striving and by using the correct technique,
does find it possible to attain.

Bhagavad Gītā 6:35–36

Just as any skill, mental or material, requires persistent effort and practice, so too does spiritual practice or meditation. All authorities, ancient and modern, have said the same:

The cessation (*nirodha*) of the waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛttis*)
is brought about by practice (*abhyāsa*) and detachment.
Practice (*abhyāsa*) is the effort
to become firmly established in that state.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:12–13

Focus on the self-shining soul (*ātman*) within, between the two
eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*); listen (to the text), “Thou are That;”
understand your oneness with it, and practise (*abhyāset*) (meditation).

Appayya Dīkshita, Yoga Darpaṇa; cf. in *PU* p.137 (n.1)

Turned within, sit in solitude
and perform spiritual practice (*abhyās*)
to attain peace of mind.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 13:1.43, *SBP* p.108

Just as the fire latent in wood does not appear without burning, so the lamp of wisdom does not arise without the practice of *yoga* (*yogābhyāsa*).

Yogakuṇḍalī Upanishad 3:14–15; cf. *TMU* p.207

Whether young or old, decrepit, diseased or feeble, success is attained in all forms of *yoga* by practice (*abhyāsa*). Success results from practice (*kriyā*). Without action (*kriyā*), how can anything happen? Success in *yoga* is never achieved by reading books (*śāstras*).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:64–65; cf. *HPSD* p.32

After initiation there should be in the aspirant after Truth, *abhyāsa* or earnest and repeated attempt at practical application of the Truth

by prescribed means of constant meditation upon the chosen ideal. Even if you have a burning thirst for God or have gained the *guru*, unless you have along with it the *abhyāsa*, unless you practise what you have been taught, you cannot get realization. When all these are firmly established in you, then you will reach the goal.

Swami Vivekananda, What Have I Learnt?, CWSV3 p.453

The next (requirement for developing *bhakti*, devotion) is *abhyāsa*, practice. The mind should always go towards God. No other things have any right to withhold it. It should continuously think of God; though this is a very hard task, yet it can be done by persistent practice. What we are now is the result of our past practice. Again, practice makes us what we shall be. So practise the other way; one sort of turning round has brought us this way, turn the other way and get out of it as soon as you can. Thinking of the senses has brought us down here – to cry one moment, to rejoice the next, to be at the mercy of every breeze, slave to everything. This is shameful, and yet we call ourselves spirits. Go the other way, think of God; let the mind not think of any physical or mental enjoyment, but of God alone. When it tries to think of anything else, give it a good blow, so that it may turn round and think of God. As oil poured from one vessel to another falls in an unbroken line, as chimes coming from a distance fall upon the ear as one continuous sound, so should the mind flow towards God in one continuous stream. We should not only impose this practice on the mind, but the senses too should be employed. Instead of hearing foolish things, we must hear about God; instead of talking foolish words, we must talk of God. Instead of reading foolish books, we must read good ones which tell of God.

Swami Vivekananda, On Bhakti Yoga, CWSV4 pp.8–9

Abhyāsa is the practical means to achieve the goal:

If you are unable to fix your mind steadily on Me,
then try to reach Me through the practice of *yoga* (*yogābhyāsa*).

Bhagavad Gītā 12:9; cf. BGT

And if the goal is not achieved in one life, the individual will pick up where he left off in the next:

He will be helplessly attracted to the path of *yoga*
by the force of his previous practice (*abhyāsa*).
For even a beginner on the path of *yoga* transcends the Vedic doctrine.

Bhagavad Gītā 6:44; cf. BGT

The benefits of spiritual practice are inestimable:

By the practice of *yoga (yogābhyāsa)*, one gains contentment, endurance of the pairs of opposites, and tranquillity.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:29, TPU p.442

Thinking continuously of Me,
with a mind straying onto nothing else,
established in spiritual communion
through the practice of *yoga (yogābhyāsa)*,
one reaches the divine and supreme Being.

Bhagavad Gītā 8:8; cf. BGT

By the right sort of practice and with the help of a *guru*, all past *karma* is destroyed:

What little *karma* we accumulate here is taken care of by the daily practice prescribed by the master. The *pralabdha* or fate *karma* has to be gone through anyway. Then the master helps the disciple to destroy the reserve or *siñchit karmas* by means of *Shabd abhyās*, the practice of the Sound Current. When the disciple reaches *trikuṭī* – the causal region – which contains the seeds of these *siñchit karmas*, or we might say it contains these *karmas* in seed form, then with the help of the master and by long practice of *Shabd abhyās*, these seeds are rendered incapable of germination. And this is not mere metaphor.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Light on Sant Mat, Letter 92, LOSM p.165

See also: **spiritual exercise**.

ādīnavānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of tribulation (*ādīnava*).

See **anupassanā**.

agathai praxeis, kalai praxeis (Gk), **bona opera** (L) *Lit.* good (*kalai, bona*) deeds (*praxeis, opera*), noble (*agathai*) deeds; from the Greek *praxis* (deed, action, act, practice, exercise); hence, not only good deeds in the world but also spiritual practices or exercises, such as prayer, meditation, and so forth.

Although generally interpreted to mean kind, unselfish or charitable behaviour in this world, such terms – when used in the translation of some ancient texts – seem at times to make better sense if they are understood as references to spiritual practice. The same applies to terms translated as ‘pious deeds’ and ‘pious works’, which in some contexts make better sense

as ‘spiritual practices’ or ‘spiritual exercises’. All such terms can refer to both inner and outer practices.

It is true that both Judaism and Christianity have championed the doctrine that salvation is attainable through good deeds and pure living. Mystics, however, have always insisted on the importance of spiritual practice in addition to compassionate and moral living. In fact, they point out that there is no dichotomy between the two because the inner being and outer practice are aspects of the same person. One’s inner nature is automatically expressed in outer behaviour.

Moreover, spiritual practices, especially in ancient times, have traditionally been kept secret, often concealed by ambiguous terms such as ‘prayer’ – and ‘good practices’ or ‘good deeds’. All this provides good reason to examine such texts with care. Hints to a deeper meaning may come from the context alone; alternatively, ‘original’ documents may have been altered in the process of hand copying. Either way, there remains ample scope for speculation and misinterpretation regarding the original text and its meaning.

Among the many ancient texts where such expressions occur are the *Clementine Homilies* and the very similar *Clementine Recognitions*, both written in Greek and believed to stem from the Judaic side of early Christianity. These documents also speak of meditation by other terms, rendered in scholarly translations as ‘study’, ‘consideration’, and ‘prayer’.¹ Although there is often ambiguity as to the intended meaning, and many places where ‘good deeds’ may be literally intended in an outward sense, there are also a number of instances where ‘good works’ and ‘good deeds’ would also include ‘good practices’ or ‘spiritual exercises’. It is also relevant that the original Greek text on which these two documents is based, the *Travels of Peter* (Peter being Jesus’ apostle), is no longer extant, and the *Clementine Recognitions* is known only from Latin and Syriac translations made around 400 CE. The Latin translation was also made by Rufinus, a notorious ‘adjuster’ of his source material according to his perspective of Christian doctrine. In these discourses, it is almost invariably Peter who is speaking. Peter says, for instance:

We do not neglect to proclaim to you what we know to be necessary for your salvation, and to show you what is the true worship of God, that, believing in God, you may be able, by means of good deeds (L. *bona opera*), to be heirs with us of the world to come.

Clementine Recognitions V:35; cf. CR p.325

And:

We are sent for this end, that we may betray his (Satan’s) disguises to you; and melting your enmities, may reconcile you to God, that you may be converted to Him, and may please Him by good deeds (L. *bona opera*).

Clementine Recognitions V:28; cf. CR p.321

And:

I counsel every learner willingly to lend his ear to the word of God, and to hear with love of the truth what we say, that his mind, receiving the best Seed, may bring forth joyful fruits by good deeds (*L. bona opera*).

Clementine Recognitions V:8, CR p.307

It is through “good deeds” or “good practices”, says Peter, that souls can “be heirs . . . of the world to come”, can “please God”, and can “bring forth joyful fruits”. In fact, although spiritual teachers have always deemed a moral and ethical life to be essential, it is only when such a life is lived in conjunction with spiritual practice that it can bear the highest spiritual fruits. Good deeds in this world may ennoble a person, but they do not lead to mystical experience, to the true worship of God.

In the third passage, Peter also says that it is necessary first to receive the “best Seed” – to be initiated into the Word – before a person “may bring forth joyful fruits by good deeds”. He reiterates this theme in a number of places, where he speaks of baptism as being “born anew by means of the Waters that were first created” – another allusion to the divine Word:

When you have come to the Father, you will learn that this is His will, that you be (spiritually) born anew by means of the Waters that were first created (*i.e.* Living Water, the Word). For he who is regenerated by Water, having filled up the measure of good works, is made heir of Him by whom he has been regenerated in incorruption. . . .

Merit accrues to men from good deeds (*L. bona opera*), but only if they be done as God commands. Now God has ordered everyone who worships Him to be sealed by baptism; but if you refuse, and obey your own will rather than God’s, you are doubtless contrary and hostile to His will. . . . But when you have been regenerated by Water, show by good deeds (*L. bona opera*) the likeness in you of that Father who has begotten you. . . .

For He has given a law, thereby aiding the minds of men, that they may the more easily perceive how they ought to act with respect to everything, in what way they may escape evil, and in what way tend to future blessings; and how, being regenerate in Water, they may by good deeds (*L. bona opera*) extinguish the fire of their old birth.

Clementine Recognitions VI:8, 10, IX:7; cf. CR pp.332–33, 405

He says that baptism in “Water” is required before “good deeds” are acceptable to God. Moreover, “merit accrues to men from good deeds, but only if they be done as God commands”: only spiritual practice performed under the guidance of a saviour bears fruit, for all other spiritual exercises are practised according to the notions of the mind, and leave the soul within the realms

of the mind. Only by “good deeds” – meaning spiritual practice – can man realize himself as built in the “likeness” or image of God the Father “who has begotten” him. This is God’s “law”: only by this means can souls escape from the “fire of their old birth”, from the fire of sensuality – by being spiritually immersed in the Living Water of the Word. The reference to good deeds makes much better sense if the meaning is that of spiritual exercises, in this case the practice of the Word.

It is, says Peter, through ignorance and illusion that the soul has become the slave of the mind:

By reason of your erroneous judgments, you have become subject to demons (*i.e.* the mind). However by acknowledgement of God Himself, by good deeds (Gk. *kalai praxeis*) you can again become masters, and command the demons as slaves; and as sons of God be constituted heirs of the eternal kingdom.

Clementine Homilies X:25, CH p.172

“By good deeds” the soul can again become the master and return to God as His son and heir. Yet experience itself demonstrates that simply behaving well in this world does not take a soul back to God. Without the spiritual strength and awareness given by spiritual practice, a person cannot even withstand the tendencies of their own mind, and will be unable to perform good deeds consistently – certainly not without some thought of egotism entering the mind, thereby diminishing their good effects. Hence, as Peter concludes:

Therefore do not refuse, when invited, to return to your first nobility; for it is possible, if you come into harmony with God by noble deeds (Gk. *agathai praxeis*). And being accounted to be sons, by reason of your likeness to Him, you shall be reinstated as lords of all.

Clementine Homilies X:6; cf. CH p.163

When invited to return to Him, the invitation should be accepted, for “by noble deeds” – implying spiritual practice – it is possible to be reconciled to God and to regain one’s spiritual birthright.

There are many other texts from the same period, where the references to good works are similarly ambiguous. Speaking of the followers of the saviour “who have passed from darkness to light”, the mystical writer of the *Odes of Solomon* goes on to say of them:

Behold all thy labourers are fair,
who work good works,
and turn away from wickedness
to the kindness that is Thine.

Odes of Solomon 11:20–21, OSD p.54

Again “work good works” could also mean “engage in spiritual practice”. There are likewise a number of places in the Manichaean texts where “righteous action”, “pious action”, or “pious deeds” are almost certainly references to spiritual practice.

See also: **good deeds** (►4), **logismos**, **meditation**, **pious deeds**, **prophet of the Truth** (7.1).

1. E.g. *Clementine Homilies* (TLG 1271:6) XI:28, CH p.187; *Clementine Recognitions* VI:1, CR p.327.

āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā (Pa) *Lit.* reflection (*saññā*) on the repulsiveness (*paṭikkūla*) of food (*āhāra*); meditation or contemplation on the repulsive nature of nutriment; consciousness or awareness of the essential impurity of food; one of several reflections, meditations or awarenesses mentioned by the Buddha in the Pali *suttas* that are intended to eliminate attachment to the world of the material senses; listed in the *Abhidhamma* (analytical systematization of the *suttas*) and associated literature such as Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga* as one of the forty meditation objects and topics (*kammaṭṭhānas*).

Depending on the context, *saññā*, from the Sanskrit *saṃjñā* (clear knowing or understanding) can be understood as cognition, perception, awareness, reflection, meditation, contemplation, and so on. In the *Saññā Sutta*, the Buddha speaks of nine *saññās* that can be practised in order to turn the mind towards the “deathless” state:

Bhikkhus (monks), these nine reflections (*saññā*), when developed and cultivated, are of great fruit and benefit. They gain a footing in the deathless and have the deathless as their consummation. Which nine? Reflection on repulsiveness (*asubha-saññā*) (of the body), reflection on death (*maraṇa-saññā*), reflection on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*), reflection on taking no delight in the entire world (*sabbaloke anabhirata-saññā*), reflection on impermanence (*anicca-saññā*), reflection on suffering due to impermanence (*anicce dukkha-saññā*), reflection on not-self in suffering (*dukkhe anattā-saññā*), reflection on abandoning (*pahāna-saññā*), reflection on dispassion (*virāga*).

Anguttara Nikāya 9:16, *Saññā Sutta*, PTS4 p.387

Several such lists are to be found in the Pali *suttas*, although the subjects and their number vary.¹ Elaborating on *āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*, the Buddha says:

It has been said: “Reflection on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*), *bhikkhus*, when developed and cultivated, is of great

fruit and benefit, culminating in the deathless, having the deathless as its consummation.” Why was this said?

When a *bhikkhu* often dwells with a mind (*ceta*) accustomed to reflection on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*), his mind shrinks away from the craving for tastes, turns back from it, rolls away from it, and is not drawn toward it, and either equanimity or aversion becomes settled in him. Just as a cock’s feather or a strip of sinew thrown into a fire shrinks away from it, turns back from it rolls away from it, and is not drawn toward it, so is it in regard to craving for tastes when a *bhikkhu* often dwells with a mind accustomed to reflection on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*).

Anguttara Nikāya 7:46, *Vitthatasattasaññā Sutta*, PTSA4 p.49; cf. NDBB pp.1033–34

He goes on to say that observation of whether his mind remains attracted to the taste of food will inform him whether or not he has made any progress in the exercise.² The same wording is used to describe the other subjects of awareness or reflection (*saññā*).

In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa devotes considerable space to the topic, describing the way in which to practise meditation on the repulsiveness of food.³ He advises:

He who wants to cultivate reflection on the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*) should learn the meditation subject, and check that he has no uncertainty about even a single word of what he has learnt. He should then go into solitary retreat and review the ten repulsive aspects of food, categorized by what is eaten, drunk, chewed, and tasted; that is to say: going, seeking, consuming, secretion, receptacle, what is undigested, what is digested, fruit, outflow, and smearing.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:5, PTSV pp.341–42; cf. PPVM p.339

He then elaborates in unsparing detail, in a manner designed to invoke a sense of revulsion, on what he means by “going, seeking, consuming, secretion, etc.”.

Firstly, ‘going’, which covers the activities of a monk who goes out to beg for food. Having performed various monastic chores and done his meditation, he sets out from the cleanliness and blissful seclusion of the monastery to the nearby village in search of food, “like a jackal to a charnel ground”. Leaving his cell, he treads on a “rug covered with the dust from his feet, geckos’ droppings, and so on”. Then he must navigate the “doorstep, which is more repulsive than the inside of the room, since it is often fouled with the droppings of rats, bats, and so on”. Following which he must negotiate the “lower terrace, which is more repulsive than the terrace above, since it is all smeared with the droppings of owls, pigeons, and so on”. After this he

comes to the grounds, “defiled by old grass and leaves blown about by the wind, by sick novices’ urine, excrement, spittle and snot, and in the rainy season by water, mud, and so on”. Then there is the “road to the monastery, which is more repulsive than the grounds”, beset with “stumps and thorns, . . . an uneven road broken up by the force of water”. On arrival at the village gate, he is greeted “perhaps by the sight of an elephant’s carcass, a horse’s carcass, a buffalo’s carcass, a human carcass, a snake’s carcass, or a dog’s carcass, . . . and not only that, but he has to suffer his nose to be assailed by their smell”:

So this repulsive experience beginning with the carpet that has to be trodden on and ending with the various kinds of carcasses that have to be seen and smelled, has to be undergone for the sake of food: “Oh, food is indeed a repulsive thing!” This is how repulsiveness (*paṭikkūlatā*) should be reviewed as to ‘going’.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:10, PTSV p.343; cf. PPVM p.340

‘Seeking’ food is portrayed in no less a lurid manner. He wanders from “house to house like a beggar with a bowl in his hand”. In the rainy season, he is knee-deep in mud, holding up his robe in one hand, with his bowl in the other. In the “hot season, he goes about covered in dirt, grass, and dust blown about by the wind”. When he reaches a house:

He has to see and even to tread in gutters and cesspools covered with bluebottles and seething with all varieties of maggots, all mixed up with fish washings, meat washings, rice washings, spittle, snot, dogs’ and pigs’ excrement, and what not, from which flies rise up and settle on his outer patched cloak, and on his bowl, and on his head.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:11, PTSV p.343; cf. PPVM p.340

Then he has to accept “yesterday’s cooked rice and stale cakes and rancid jelly, sauce, and so on”; or he must endure rejection. Some tell him to move on, or they ignore him or they turn their heads away, while others abuse him, saying, “Go away, baldy head!” All this has to be endured for the sake of food. Therefore, he thinks, “‘Oh, food is indeed a repulsive thing!’ This is how repulsiveness (*paṭikkūlatā*) should be reviewed as to ‘seeking’.”

After depicting going out to beg and receiving the food, Buddhaghosa moves on to “consuming”, which refers to preparing the food, putting it into his mouth, and chewing it:

How as to ‘consuming’? After he has sought food in this manner, and is sitting at ease in a comfortable place outside the village, then so long as he has not dipped his hand into it, he can invite a respected *bhikkhu*

or any decent person, if he sees one, to share it; but as soon as he has dipped his hand into it, out of desire to eat, he would be ashamed to say to anybody, “Take some.”

Then he dips his hand into the food and squeezes it; and the juice runs down his five fingers and wets any dry, crisp food there may be, and makes it sodden. And when its pleasing appearance has been spoilt by his squeezing it, and he has made it into a ball and put it into his mouth, then his lower teeth function like a mortar, his upper teeth like a pestle, and his tongue like a hand. And it gets pounded there with the pestle of his teeth, like a dog’s dinner in a dog’s trough, while he turns it over and over with his tongue; then the thin spittle at the tip of the tongue smears it, and the thick spittle behind the middle of the tongue smears it, and the filth from the teeth in the parts where a toothpick cannot reach smears it.

When thus mashed up and besmeared, this peculiar mixture, now destitute of its original colour and smell, is reduced to a condition as utterly nauseating as a dog’s vomit in a dog’s trough. Yet, notwithstanding that it looks like that, it can still be swallowed because it is no longer in the field of vision. This is how repulsiveness (*paṭikkūlatā*) should be reviewed as to ‘consuming’.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:14–16, PTSV p.344; cf. PPVM p.341

And so the description continues, no details spared, through the remaining seven stages of digestion, elimination, and so on. “Secretion” is when the food, in the process of being eaten, is “smeared” with one or other of “bile, phlegm, lymph, or blood”. The “receptacle” into which the recently consumed food is received is the belly, which is like a “cesspit”, where the food in its “undigested” state remains for some time,

shrouded in absolute darkness, . . . tainted by various smells of ordure, and utterly foetid and repulsive. . . . And smothered by a layer of phlegm, and covered with the froth and bubbles produced by fermentation through digestion in the heat of the bodily fires, it becomes quite repulsive.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:19, PTSV p.345; cf. PPVM p.342

Its “digested” state is no better:

Giving off froth and bubbles, it turns into excrement and fills the receptacle for digested food, like brown clay squeezed with a smoothing trowel and packed into a tube; and it also turns into urine and fills the bladder.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:20, PTSV p.345; cf. PPVM p.342

The “fruit” of eating depends on the digestive system. “Properly digested”, it becomes the various bodily parts. “Badly digested”, it leads to a “hundred diseases beginning with itch, ringworm, smallpox, leprosy, plague, consumption, coughs, flux, and so on”. “Outflow” receives the familiar treatment:

How as to ‘outflow’? On being swallowed, it enters by one door, after which it flows out by several doors, (as in the passage) beginning, “Eye secretions from the eye; ear secretions from the ear”.⁴ On being swallowed, it is swallowed even in the company of large gatherings. But on flowing out, now converted into excrement, urine, *etc.*, it is eliminated only in solitude. On the first day, one is delighted to eat it, elated, and full of happiness and joy. On the second day, one stops one’s nose to void it, with a wry face, disgusted, and dismayed. On the first day, one swallows it lustfully, greedily, gluttonously, infatuatedly. On the second day, after a single night has passed, one excretes it with distaste, ashamed, humiliated, and disgusted. Hence, the ancients said:

The food and drink so greatly prized –
the crisp to chew, the soft to suck –
All goes in by a single door,
but by nine doors come oozing out.

The food and drink so greatly prized –
the crisp to chew, the soft to suck –
Men like to eat in company,
but to eliminate in secrecy.

The food and drink so greatly prized –
the crisp to chew, the soft to suck –
These a man eats with great delight,
and then excretes with dumb disgust.

The food and drink so greatly prized –
the crisp to chew, the soft to suck –
A single night will be enough
to bring them to putridity.

This is how repulsiveness (*paṭikkūlatā*) should be reviewed as to outflow.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 11:22–23, PTSV pp.345–46; cf. PPVM pp.342–43

Finally, Buddhaghosa provides a graphic image of “smearing”. Food, he observes, during the process of eating, smears the hands, lips, tongue, teeth

and palate, which “become repulsive” and have to be “washed, and washed again” to remove the smell. It also turns to “spittle, phlegm, . . . eye secretions, ear secretions, snot, urine, excrement, *etc.*” which smear their respective “passages”, which have to be washed, and which “never become either clean or pleasing even though washed every day, . . . even after two or three washings with cow dung and clay and scented powder”. He then ends his description with the familiar refrain, “This is how repulsiveness (*paṭikkūlatā*) should be reviewed as to ‘smearing’.” Sun-dried cow dung, incidentally, as a product of the ‘holy cow’, is revered in India, where, among its many uses, it is regarded (rightly or wrongly) as a natural antiseptic and purifier.

Buddhaghosa then briefly describes how taking this concept concerning the repulsiveness of food as a subject for meditation, focusing and reflecting upon it in the manner described, leads, in the manner common to all the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhānas*), to a state of deep inner concentration. Then, following the traditional method of *Theravāda* meditation, through initial and applied thought (*vitakka-vicāra*), the internal image or sign (*nimitta*) of repulsiveness of food becomes manifest to the practitioner. And as he cultivates this internal image, the five basic human “hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*, *i.e.* ill will, mental laziness, *etc.*) are suppressed”, and his mind becomes concentrated in threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). This is the stage of concentration experienced on the approach to the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). But because an element of individuality pervades the practice, attainment of the ensuing contemplative stages of fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and entry into the *jhānas*, where the self is increasingly forgotten, is not possible using this technique.

See also: **jhāna**.

1. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 34, *Dasuttara Sutta*, PTS D3 pp.290–91.
2. *Anguttara Nikāya* 7:46, *Vitthatasattasaññā Sutta*, PTS A4 pp.49–50.
3. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 11:1–26, PTS V pp.341–47; *cf. PPVM* pp.337–44.
4. *Sutta Nipāta* 1:11, *Vijaya Sutta*, PTS N p.34.

ajapā gāyatrī, ajapā mantra (S/H) *Lit.* unutterable (*ajapā*) verbal formula (*mantra*, *gāyatrī*), unutterable hymn (*gāyatrī*). *Gāyatrī* is a poetic metre frequently encountered in the *Ṛig Veda*, but it is also the name of a sacred and well-known verse or hymn known as the *Gāyatrī* or *Sāvitrī Mantra*.

The *ajapā gāyatrī* is a yogic *mantra*, mentioned in a number of yogic texts,¹ and comprised of the *mantra* ‘*haṃsa*’. The literal meaning of *haṃsa* is ‘goose’, though it is more commonly translated as ‘swan’. In Indian mystical symbolism, the *haṃsa* symbolizes the pure soul, self, or *ātman*. This can be either the individual soul, or the supreme Soul or Self, the *Ātman* or *Paramātman*

(supreme Self), also known as *Brahman*. The *ajapā gāyatrī* or *ajapā mantra* is the non-verbal *mantra* ‘*haṃ-sa*’ whose unconscious utterance is inhalation and exhalation. The *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* says:

The *jīva* breathes out with the letter *ha* and breathes in again with the letter *sa*. Thus the *jīva* is always uttering the *mantra*, “*Haṃ-sa, haṃ-sa*”. The *jīva* utters the *mantra* continuously, 21,600 times in a single day and night. This is called the *ajapā gāyatrī* (unutterable hymn), and has always been the bestower of *nirvāṇa* to the *yogins*. Through its very thought, man is freed from sins. Neither in the past nor in the future is there a science equal to this, a *japa* (recitation) equal to this, or a meritorious action equal to this.

Dhyānabindu Upanishad 61–65; cf. TMU p.157

Haṃsa, however, is used in a number of contexts, with a variety of meanings. A *haṃsa* (swan) is the vehicle of the creator deity, *Brahmā*. *Haṃ* is also understood as *aham* (‘I’) and *sa* (That). Hence, when *haṃsa haṃsa haṃsa* is repeated sequentially, it can be heard as *so-haṃ so-haṃ so-haṃ*, which is the great Upanishadic saying, “I am That (*so’haṃ*).”² Sometimes the *mantra* is repeated as “*Haṃ-sa so-haṃ*”, one syllable being pronounced with each out-breath and in-breath.

The *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* goes on to speak of the *ajapā Gāyatrī Mantra* as the means of raising the *kuṇḍalinī*, which carries the soul up through the bodily *chakras*, exiting through the *brahmarandhra* in the crown of the head, which leads on to the *sahasrāra* (*lit.* thousand rayed, the thousand-petalled lotus).

The *Haṃsa Upanishad* speaks in a similar manner. After a brief description of the various yogic practices associated with the repetition of the *mantra*, it adds that the *ajapā mantra* only takes the practitioner as far as the *unmanī* or transcendental state of a deeply concentrated mind, after which the soul travels by means of inner Sound (*Nāda*):

Unmanī is the culmination of the *ajapā (mantra)*. Having thus meditated upon *manas* by this means, one hears the *Nāda* after uttering this *japa (mantra)* a crore (ten million) of times.

Haṃsa Upanishad 4; cf. TMU p.163

The *Upanishad* then goes on to list the ten sounds heard within. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* adds that the *ajapā japa* is repeated with the attention fixed in three places, the *mūlādhāra*, the *anāhat*, and the *ājñā chakras*. These are located, respectively, in the rectal area, in the heart, and behind the eyes.³ It further adds:

All *jīvas* are constantly and unconsciously reciting this *ajapā mantra*, only for a fixed number of times every day. But a yogi should recite

this consciously and counting the numbers. By doubling the number of *ajapā* (i.e. by 30 respirations per minute), the state of *man-unmanī* (fixity of mind) is attained.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:90–91, GSV p.51

1. E.g. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 5:85–86; *Tripurā-tāpinī Upanishad* 4:20–21; *Yogachūdāmaṇi Upanishad* 31–35.
2. *Īsha Upanishad* 16.
3. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 5:85.

ajapā jap (H/Pu), **ajapā sumiran** (H) *Lit.* unrepeatable (*ajapā*) repetition (*jap*) or remembrance (*sumiran*); unutterable utterance; silent speech, voiceless repetition.

Jap is the common Indian practice of verbally repeating certain sacred formulae, *mantras*, prayers or sacred scriptures, often for long periods at a time. The intention is to keep the mind upon the remembrance (*sumiran*) of God. *Ajapā jap* refers to the silent, internal, automatic, effortless, mental repetition of a *mantra* – much as a well-known song repeats itself spontaneously in the mind.

Ajapā Jap, together with other similar terms such as *akath Kathā* (unutterable Story), are also used as terms for the silent music of the creative power. Simply repeating words with the tongue does not necessarily lead the soul to the genuine remembrance of God. God and His presence within and without are truly experienced when the soul and mind are absorbed in listening to the constant melody or message of God, the ceaseless and wordless music of the divine Word. To be aware of God's presence through continuous consciousness of His creative power is the natural means of truly remembering Him at all times. One of the many names given by Indian mystics to constant contact with this power is thus the *ajapā jap*, the unutterable utterance, the unrepeatable repetition.

In some instances, *ajapā jap* seems to be used in a general sense, referring both to contact with the creative power as well as to the spontaneous, internal repetition of a *mantra*. There are many examples of the use of this term:

The heart-lotus is turned upside-down
and is filled with ambrosial nectar (*amrit*).

This mind does not go out:
it does not get distracted.

It does not forget the *ajapā Jap*:
it is immersed in the primal Lord God of the ages.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 1291, AGK

Within has the Creator given me the gift
of the unrepeatd repetition (*ajapā sumiran*)
in which my mind has become absorbed,
says Kabīr thoughtfully.

Kabīr, Sākhī Sangrah, Sumiran kā ang 17, KSS pp.88–89

See also: **japa**.

āloka-saññā (Pa) *Lit.* perception (*saññā*) of light (*āloka*); conception of light; meditation or contemplation on light; mentioned by the Buddha in the Pali *suttas*. *Āloka* is also one of the ten *kaṣiṇas* (external meditation objects) listed in some of the later commentaries among the forty meditation objects and themes (*kammaṭṭhānas*). The ten *kaṣiṇas* are also listed in the Pali *suttas*, where the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) *kaṣiṇa* replaces the *āloka kaṣiṇa*.¹

In the *Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta*, the Buddha describes the cultivation (*bhāvanā*) of four kinds of concentration (*samādhi*). The first leads to a happy and contented life (*diṭṭhadhamma-sukha-vihāra*); the second to gnosis and (inner) vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*), equivalent to the divine eye that sees beyond the outward appearance of things; the third to mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sati-sampajañña*); and the fourth to elimination of impurities (*khaya-āsava*). Gnosis and vision, he says, are inculcated by means of meditation on the perception of light (*āloka-saññā*). By training his mind to see no difference between day and night, says the passage, a practitioner develops the open mind required for true wisdom and inner vision to arise:²

What is the cultivation of concentration (*samādhi bhāvanā*) that leads to the acquisition of gnosis and (inner) vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*)? For this, a *bhikkhu* attends to the concept of light (*āloka-saññā*). He focuses on the perception (*saññā*) of day in this manner: “As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.” Thus, with a mind that is clear and unclouded, he develops a mind imbued with brightness. This is the cultivation of concentration that leads to the acquisition of gnosis and (inner) vision (*ñāṇa-dassana*).

Anguttara Nikāya 4:41, Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta, PTSA2 p.45

Āloka-saññā is again mentioned in the *Pacalāyana Sutta*. According to the story, when the Buddha, using his divine eye, sees that his disciple Moggallāna is nodding off during his meditation, he gives him several suggestions on how to overcome torpor and drowsiness. Among these suggestions is the practice of *āloka-saññā*.³

The practice of *āloka-saññā* that is referred to here is probably concentration on an external light source, leading to concentration upon the inner light. This would lead to the desired result. In this case, seeking to see no distinction between day and night is perhaps an addition, and *āloka-saññā* is really the same as meditation upon an *āloka kasiṇa*, which is said to develop the divine eye or inner vision.

This is the way that *āloka-saññā* is understood by a number of commentators. Among the primary obstacles that stand in the way of entry into the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions) are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) of: sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*) of any kind in the field of the five senses; ill will (*vyāpāda*) of any sort; sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); restlessness and anxiety (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and wavering doubt or lack of conviction (*vicikicchā*). Recalling the advice given by the Buddha to Moggallāna, *āloka-saññā* is commonly prescribed as a way to conquer sloth and torpor.⁴ As the Thai Buddhist monk Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993) writes:

Torpor (*thīna-middha*) is paired with perception of light (*āloka-saññā*). ‘Torpor’ means here dullness, apathy, drowsiness, boredom. The mind overpowered by this hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) loses its brightness, just as pure water loses its clarity when overgrown by algae and weeds, so that things like pebbles lying on the bottom cannot be seen. Thus torpor is a hindrance, damaging the mind, making it unworkable. Perception of light (*āloka-saññā*) is a form of practice that gives rise to constant, steady bright light resembling sunshine. This light and the time of its appearance are conditioned by character and training. The development of perception of light (*āloka-saññā*), making the mind bright as if perceiving sunshine, enables one to overcome sleepiness, dullness, and laxity. It enables one to sleep soundly when one does sleep, and when awake, to be wide awake. Perception of light (*āloka-saññā*) is thus the very best means of awakening the mind, the antidote for torpor.

Buddhadasa Bhikkhu, *Ānāpānasati*, AMBB pp.194–95

See also: **kasiṇa**.

1. *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:25 (*Kasiṇa Sutta*), 10:29 (*Paṭhamakosala Sutta*), PTSA5 pp.46–47, 60; *Majjhima Nikāya* 77 (*Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta*), PTSM2 pp.14–15; *Dīgha Nikāya* 33 (*Sangīti Sutta*), PTSD3 pp.268, 290.
2. See also e.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:29, *Udāyī Sutta*, PTSA3 p.323; *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, PTSD3 pp.222–23.
3. *Anguttara Nikāya* 7:58, *Pacalāyana Sutta*, PTSA4 p.86.
4. See also Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, *Craft of the Heart*, CHLD p.54.

‘amal (A/P) (pl. *a‘māl*) *Lit.* work, deed, action, practice, endeavour, performance, achievement. Both Muslim theology as well as Sufism are said to be based on knowledge (‘ilm) and practice (‘amal), and the two are closely interlinked in Islamic thought. According to a *ḥadīth*, “Knowledge (‘ilm) without practice (‘amal) is like a tree without fruit.”¹

The same is true of faith (*īmān*) and practice. In Muslim theology, faith is defined as inwardly believing in (*i‘tiqād*) or attesting (*taṣdīq*) the faith, as well as making a verbal declaration of it in the *shahādah* (declaration of faith). Most commentators also add that faith must also be put into practice (‘amal) by observing the *sharī‘ah* (Islamic religious law). Traditional Muslim practices include the five daily prayers (*ṣalāh*), pilgrimage to Mecca (*ḥajj*), fasting during *Ramaḍān* (*ṣawm*), and so on.

In Sufism, practice means spiritual practice, such as *dhikr* (remembrance, repetition). Knowledge alone, writes Ibn al-‘Arabī, is insufficient:

In our view, knowledge (‘ilm) requires practice (‘amal), and necessarily so, or else it is not knowledge (‘ilm), even if it appears in the form of knowledge (‘ilm).

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 3:333.17, FMIA6 (4:366) p.59, SPK p.151

He also says that theoretical knowledge is turned into gnosis or certain mystical knowledge (*ma‘rifah*) through practice (‘amal). And he contrasts this with knowledge that is only understood by intellectual reflection, which must always remain uncertain. The “tribe”, in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s terminology, are the people of God, the wayfarers, or followers of the mystical path:

For the tribe, *ma‘rifah* (gnosis) is a path (*maḥajjah*). Hence any knowledge (‘ilm) that arises entirely from (spiritual) practice (‘amal), godfearingness (*taqwā*) and wayfaring (*sulūk*) is *ma‘rifah*, since it derives from a true unveiling that is not surrounded by confusion. This contrasts with knowledge (‘ilm) that arises from reflective consideration (*al-naẓar al-fikrī*), which is never safe from confusion and bewilderment.

Ibn al-‘Arabī, Meccan Revelations 2:297.33, FMIA3 (2:177) pp.447–48; cf. SPK p.149

Al-Ghazālī writes that for spiritual practice to lead to a satisfactory result, it must be motivated by sincere intent and understanding:

Success on the spiritual path is not possible without gaining knowledge (‘ilm) and carrying on spiritual practice (‘amal). Practice (‘amal) without a purpose (*nīyah*) is futile toil; and intent (*nīyah*) without sincerity

(*ikhhlāṣ*) is hypocrisy; and sincerity without truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and after investigation is a delusion.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyāʾ ʿUlūm al-Dīn 4:7, IUDG4 p.477; cf. RRS p.317

See also: **muʿāmalah**.

1. *Ḥadīth*, in *SPL* p.10.

amrit velā (Pu) *Lit.* hour (*velā*) of nectar (*amrit*); the time of elixir, the nectar hour; the time that is best suited for spiritual practice; the hours before sunrise, which in India is roughly between 3 a.m. and 6 a.m.; also called *brāhmamuhūrta* (God's time); an expression used in the Sikh holy book, the *Ādi Granth*.

The early morning hours are always said to be the best for meditation because the body and the mind are fresh after the night's sleep, and the likelihood of any disturbance at that time is low. The vibrations of the world are stilled to a great extent while the majority of people are asleep. Night is also a time of in-drawing, a time of inner restoration, in preparation for the outgoing-ness of the day to come.

Moreover, in sleep, the soul-consciousness withdraws within the body and goes down to the throat or navel centres. In the waking state, consciousness ascends to the eye centre, but spreads out into the world. When a person has just arisen from sleep, the consciousness rises up, but has not yet spread out. This time, therefore, before involvement with the world begins, is a good time for meditation.

Mystics of all ages and cultures have laid stress upon spending at least part of the night in prayer to God or in remembrance of God – often a veiled reference to meditation. Many religions, especially in monastic or quietist traditions, preserve the custom of keeping a vigil at night, though the time may be spent in verbal prayer or the study of religious books. The tradition, however, generally stems from the time when seekers of God were taught to practise contemplation during the night.

The *gurus* of the Sikh tradition have described this time of the day as the *amrit velā*:

The Lord's wealth is like jewels, gems, and rubies.
 At the appointed time in the *amrit velā* (time of elixir),
 the Lord's devotees lovingly centre their attention on the Lord,
 and the wealth of the Lord.
 The devotees of the Lord plant the seed of the Lord's wealth
 in the *amrit velā*;
 They eat it, and spend it, but it is never exhausted.

In this world and the next,
the devotees are blessed with glorious greatness –
the wealth of the Lord.

Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 734, AGK

In the *amrit velā*, chant the true Name (*Nām*),
and contemplate His glorious greatness.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 2, AGK

See also: **brāhmamuhūrta**.

anāhad (Shabd) mārg, anāhat (Shabd) mārg (H/Pu) *Lit.* the path (*mārg*) of the unstruck (*anāhad, anāhat*) Sound (*Shabd*); the path of the Word or Sound Current, which is the divine creative power; also called *surat Shabd yoga*. See **surat Shabd**.

anamnēsis (Gk) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection; used by Plato and later by Plotinus for the soul's recollection of the immortal state it once enjoyed in the spiritual realms.

How does the soul perceive the realities of the spiritual realms? Plato espoused the doctrine of rebirth (*palingenesia*) and *metempsychosis* (rebirth into the same or different species), and his answer to this question is that the soul acquires experience of the transcendental Reality before it comes into the body; all learning is, in effect, a recollection of that prior experience.¹ *Anamnēsis* is the recollection of knowledge possessed by the soul prior to its coming into the body.²

As Aristotle explains, the spiritual part (*nous*) of man has the potential to know all things. The *eidē* (forms) – the blueprint of all knowledge and skills (from how to create a cow to how to change a chariot wheel) – are present in the *nous*, but in potential.³ Since the entire material world is a reflection of the spiritual world, everything 'here' has its blueprint or more real manifestation 'there'. Even in terms of human skills, every invention starts as an idea in the mind.

According to Plato, there are three methods of experiencing or achieving direct knowledge of the spiritual realms: divine love (*erōs*), dialectic (*dialektikē*), and recollection (*anamnēsis*). He adds that those who are blessed with the gift of such recollection are few:

The soul of every man has by law of nature beheld the realities, otherwise it would not have entered into a human being; but it is not easy for all souls to gain from earthly things a recollection (*anamimnēskesthai*)

of those realities, either for those who had but a brief view of them at that earlier time, or for those who, after falling to earth, were so unfortunate as to be turned toward unrighteousness through some bad company, and to have forgotten the holy sights they once saw. Few, then, are left which retain an adequate recollection (*mnēmē*) of them.

Plato, Phaedrus 249e–250a; cf. PEA pp.482–83

Every human being carries a latent, inner knowledge, which can be awakened or elicited through the methods of proper questioning under the guidance of an experienced person who has attained recollection of these realities:

Seeing then that the soul is immortal and has been born many times, and has beheld all things both in this world and in the nether realms, she has acquired knowledge of all and everything; so that it is no wonder that she should be able to recollect all that she knew before about virtue and other things. For as all nature is akin, and the soul has learned all things, there is no reason why we should not, by remembering but one single thing – an act which men call learning – discover everything else, if we have courage and faint not in the search; since it would seem, research and learning are wholly recollection (*anamnēsis*).

Plato, Meno 81c-d, PLPM pp.302–3

Plotinus (c.205–270 CE) attributes the soul's loss of memory and its forgetfulness of prenatal experiences to its downward tendencies, through which it has become enslaved by the material senses. The soul's turning away from the higher realities has clouded its memory. The way out of this cave of forgetfulness is contemplation of Reality through the process of recollection. In fact, recollection allows the soul to live simultaneously in both this world and the spiritual realms:

With this comes what has been called the shedding of the wings and shackling in the body: the soul has lost the purity it had when it was with the universal Soul. Its state was altogether better when it was directed upwards. Now, it is fallen; it is captive and shackled. Prevented from expressing its spiritual nature, it operates through the senses. It is said to be buried, and in a cave. But despite all this, it still retains something transcendent, and by turning to spiritual awareness (*noēsis*), it is loosed from its shackles and soars – but only when it takes to the contemplation of Essential Being or Reality (*ta Onta*) by recollection (*anamnēsis*). Souls that take this way have a foot in both worlds, so to speak, of necessity living by turns the life there and the life here. Those who are more able to keep company with the *Nous*

(Spirit) live more there; those whose character or circumstances are less favourable live more here.

Plotinus, Enneads 4:8.4; cf. PA4 pp.408–11, PEC p.203

See also: **logismos, meditation, noēsis** (8.1), **theōria**.

1. Plato, *Phaedo* 72e, 92d.
2. Plato, *Meno* 85d.
3. Aristotle, *De Anima* 429a.

ānāpānasati (Pa), **ānāpāna-smṛiti** (S), **dbugs rngub pa dang 'byung ba dran pa** (T), **shūxiguān** (C), **sūsokukan** (J) *Lit.* mindfulness (*sati*, *dran pa*) of in-breathing (*āna*, *dbugs rngub pa*) and out-breathing (*apāna*, *dang 'byung ba*); focused mental observation of inhalation and exhalation; meditation (*guān*, *kan*) by counting (*shǔ*, *sū*) the breaths (*xī*, *soku*); one of the most popular and fundamental *Theravāda* Buddhist meditation techniques, in which the initial meditation object upon which the attention is focused is the in-breath and out-breath; appears in the Pali *suttas* as the first of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) and first of the six practices comprising contemplation on the body (*kāyānupassanā*); the ninth of the ten recollections (*anussati*) listed in the *Abhidhamma* (analytical texts) among the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*), the *sutta* commentaries and other associated literature,¹ where the practice receives considerable elucidation and elaboration.

Some Pali *suttas*, such as the *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*,² divide the practice into four variations on the basic theme of in-breathing and out-breathing. Others, like the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, identify sixteen such variations.³ The *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta* describes *ānāpānasati* as the first of six practices comprising contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*). *Ānāpānasati* is substantially different from the *prāṇāyāma* of *haṭha yoga*, which uses breathing exercises as a means of awakening consciousness of the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy). *Ānāpānasati* is a practice of mentally observing one's natural breathing, of using normal breathing simply as something on which to fix the attention:

How does a monk abide contemplating the body (*kāyānupassanā*) as body? Here, a monk, having gone into the forest, or to the root of a tree or to an empty hut, sits down cross-legged, holding his body erect, having established mindfulness (*sati*) (on the breath) before him. Mindfully he breathes in (*assasati*), mindfully he breathes out (*passasati*). When he breathes in a long breath, he is aware that he is breathing in a long breath; when he breathes out a long breath, he is

aware that he is breathing out a long breath. When he breathes in a short breath, he is aware that he is breathing in a short breath; when he breathes out a short breath, he is aware that he is breathing out a short breath.

He trains himself, thinking: “I will breathe in, being conscious of the whole body (*i.e.* of the entire breathing process).” ... “I will breathe out, being conscious of the whole body.” ... “I will breathe in, calming the whole bodily process (*kāya-sankhāra*).” ... “I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process.”

Dīgha Nikāya 22, Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSD2 p.291; cf. TBLD pp.335–36

While breathing in and out in a natural manner, the meditator establishes a quiet and concentrated awareness of the process. He focuses his attention upon calming and becoming fully mindful of the entire breathing process. Having gained control of his mind, at least to this extent, the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* concludes:

As he abides thus – diligent, ardent, and resolute – his memories and intentions based on the household life are abandoned; with their abandoning his mind becomes steadied internally, quieted, brought to singleness, and concentrated. That is how a *bhikkhu* develops mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*).

Majjhima Nikāya 119, Kāyagatāsati Sutta, PTSM3 p.89, MDBB p.950

As probably the most widely practised form of *Theravāda* meditation, at least at the present time, teachers and students alike have developed a number of their own methods. The Thai Buddhist teacher Ajahn Lee (1907–1961) outlines two forms of practice. The first begins with mindfulness of the breath, repetition of a short verbal formula in the mind to help keep the mind focused, and centring of the attention at several places within the head:

Sit in a half-lotus position, right leg on top of the left leg, your hands placed palm up on your lap, right hand on top of the left. Keep your body straight and your mind on the task before you. Raise your hands in respect, palm to palm in front of the heart, and think of the qualities of the Buddha, *Dhamma*, and *sangha*: *Buddho me natho* – The Buddha is my mainstay (refuge). *Dhammo me natho* – The *Dhamma* is my mainstay (refuge). *Sangho me natho* – The *sangha* is my mainstay (refuge). Then repeat in your mind, *buddho, buddho; dhammo, dhammo; sangho, sangho*. Return your hands to your lap and repeat one word, *buddho*, three times in your mind.

Then think of the in-and-out breath, counting the breaths in pairs. First think *bud-* with the in-breath, *-dho* with the out, ten times. Then

begin again, thinking *buddho* with the in-breath, *buddho* with the out, seven times. Then begin again: as the breath goes in and out once, think *buddho* once, five times. Then begin again: as the breath goes in and out once, think *buddho* three times. Do this for three in-and-out breaths.

Now you can stop counting the breaths, and simply think *bud-* with the in-breath and *-dho* with the out. Let the breath be relaxed and natural. Keep your mind perfectly still, focused on the breath as it comes in and out of the nostrils. When the breath goes out, don't send the mind out after it. When the breath comes in, don't let the mind follow it in. Let your awareness be broad, cheerful, and open. Don't force the mind too much. Relax. Pretend that you're breathing out in the wide open air. Keep the mind still, like a post at the edge of the sea. When the water rises, the post doesn't rise with it; when the water ebbs, the post doesn't sink.

When you've reached this level of stillness, you can stop thinking *buddho*. Simply be aware of the feeling of the breath.

Then slowly bring your attention inward, focusing it on the various aspects of the breath – the important aspects that can give rise to intuitive powers of various kinds: clairvoyance; clairaudience; the ability to know the minds of others; the ability to remember previous lives; the ability to know where different people and animals are reborn after death; and knowledge of the various elements or potentials that are connected with, and can be of use to, the body.

These elements come from the bases of the breath. The first base: centre the mind on the tip of the nose and then slowly move it to the middle of the forehead, the second base. Keep your awareness broad. Let the mind rest for a moment at the forehead and then bring it back to the nose. Keep moving it back and forth between the nose and the forehead – like a person climbing up and down a mountain – seven times. Then let it settle at the forehead. Don't let it go back to the nose.

From here, let it move to the third base, the middle of the top of the head, and let it settle there for a moment. Keep your awareness broad. Inhale the breath at that spot, let it spread throughout the head for a moment, and then return the mind to the middle of the forehead. Move the mind back and forth between the forehead and the top of the head seven times, finally letting it rest on the top of the head.

Then bring it into the fourth base, the middle of the brain. Let it be still for a moment and then bring it back out to the top of the head. Keep moving it back and forth between these two spots, finally letting it settle in the middle of the brain. Keep your awareness broad. Let the refined breath in the brain spread to the lower parts of the body.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadhara, Keeping the Breath in Mind, KBMS pp.11–12

At this point, the attention being steady, an image or sign (*nimitta*) related to the *ānāpānasati* practice may appear within. By focusing the attention on the *nimitta*, the concentration becomes deeper and the *nimitta* will become self-luminous:

When you reach this point you may find that the breath starts giving rise to various signs (*nimitta*), such as seeing or feeling hot, cold, or tingling sensations in the head. You may see a pale, murky vapour or your own skull. Even so, don't let yourself be affected by whatever appears. If you don't want the *nimitta* to appear, breathe deep and long, down into the heart, and it will immediately go away.

When you see that a *nimitta* has appeared, mindfully focus your awareness on it – but be sure to focus on only one at a time, choosing whichever one is most comfortable. Once you've got hold of it, expand it so that it's as large as your head. The bright white *nimitta* is useful to the body and mind: it's a pure breath that can cleanse the blood in the body, reducing or eliminating feelings of physical pain.

When you have this white light as large as the head, bring it down to the fifth base, the centre of the chest. Once it's firmly settled, let it spread out to fill the chest. Make this breath as white and as bright as possible, and then let both the breath and the light spread throughout the body, out to every pore, until different parts of the body appear on their own as pictures. If you don't want the pictures, take two or three long breaths and they'll disappear. Keep your awareness still and expansive. Don't let it latch onto or be affected by any *nimitta* that may happen to pass into the brightness of the breath. Keep careful watch over the mind. Keep it one. Keep it intent on a single preoccupation, the refined breath, letting this refined breath suffuse the entire body.

When you've reached this point, knowledge will gradually begin to unfold. The body will be light, like fluff. The mind will be rested and refreshed – supple, solitary, and self-contained. There will be an extreme sense of physical pleasure and mental ease.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Keeping the Breath in Mind, KBMS p.12

All supernatural knowledge is contained within the higher mind; and Ajahn Lee observes that, when the concentration is such that the self-luminous *nimitta* has become stable, this knowledge can be accessed:

If you want to acquire knowledge and skill, practise these steps until you're adept at entering, leaving, and staying in place. When you've mastered them, you'll be able to give rise to the *nimitta* of the breath – the brilliantly white ball or lump of light – whenever you want. When you want knowledge, simply make the mind still and let go of all preoccupations, leaving just the brightness and emptiness. Think

one or two times of whatever you want to know – of things inside or outside, concerning yourself or others – and the knowledge will arise or a mental picture will appear. To become thoroughly expert you should, if possible, study directly with someone who has practised and is skilled in these matters, because knowledge of this sort can come only from the practice of centring the mind.

Ajahn Lee Dhammadharo, Keeping the Breath in Mind, KBMS p.12

In traditional *Theravāda* practice, the appearance of a learnt or acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), followed by the self-luminous counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*), is a welcome stage and a part of progress towards entering the four *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption). The stage of concentration that comes along with the *paṭibhāga nimitta* is known as threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). Further deepening of concentration leads to *appanā samādhi* (fixed concentration) and entry into the first *jhāna*, from where the meditator proceeds to the higher *jhānas*. The first four *jhānas* correspond to *rūpaloka* (world of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes), which would seem to correspond to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology.

The classical description of *ānāpānasati* is explained in great detail in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*.⁴ He begins by quoting an inspirational passage from the *Samyutta Nikāya*:

Bhikkhus, this concentration by mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), when developed and cultivated, is peaceful and sublime, an ambrosial pleasant dwelling, and it immediately banishes and stills evil, unwholesome (*akusala*) states whenever they arise.

Samyutta Nikāya 54:9, Asubha Sutta, PTS5 p.321; cf. CDBB p.1774

Buddhaghosa elaborates on the description of *ānāpānasati* in the *suttas*, continuing with a description of the arising of the internal *nimitta* and why it may appear differently to different people:

It appears to some like a star or a cluster of gems or a cluster of pearls; to others, with a rough touch like that of silk-cotton seeds or a peg made of heartwood; to others, like a long braid string or a wreath of flowers or a puff of smoke; to others, like a stretched-out cobweb, or a film of cloud, or a lotus flower, or a chariot wheel, or the moon's disc, or the sun's disc...

This single meditation subject appears differently because of difference in perception (*saññā*). It is born of perception, its source is perception, it is produced by perception. Therefore it should be understood that when it appears differently it is because of difference in perception...

And as soon as the *nimitta* appears, his hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are suppressed, his defilements (*kilesa*) subside, his mindfulness (*sati*) is established, and his consciousness (*citta*) is concentrated in threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:215–16, 220, PTSV pp.285–86; cf. PPVM pp.277–79

This *nimitta*, he adds, should be cherished and guarded in the mind:

He should not give attention to the colour of the *nimitta* or review its particular characteristics. He should guard it as carefully as a king's chief queen guards the child in her womb due to become a universal monarch (*cakkavattin*), or as a farmer guards his ripening crops. . . . Then, guarding it thus, he should make it grow and improve with repeated attention.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:221, PTSV p.286; cf. PPVM p.279

Following this, the meditator attains fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and enters the first and subsequent *jhānas*. The method of ascent through the *jhānas* parallels that of meditation on other objects or topics (*kammaṭṭhāna*) that lead the practitioner into the *jhānas*.

According to the *Ānāpāna Saṃyutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*, great benefits accrue from the practice of *ānāpānasati*. These include: relief from bodily and mental tiredness; freedom from impurities (*āsava*); memories and motivations of worldly life are discarded; desire for sensual pleasures falls away; and entry into the four lower *jhānas* and then into the four higher states (*arūpāyatanas*) is accomplished. In fact, in the *Dīpa Sutta*, the Buddha says, “Before my enlightenment (*sambodha*), while I was still a *bodhisatta*, not yet fully enlightened, I generally remained in this state (*vihāra*, *lit.* dwelt in this dwelling).”⁵

In the *Ānanda Sutta* of the *Ānāpāna Saṃyutta*,⁶ the Buddha describes how *ānāpānasati* leads to establishing the four foundations of mindfulness – to full and constant awareness of all aspects of the body, mind and consciousness, and attention to following the spiritual path. This in turn leads to attainment of the seven factors required for enlightenment (*bojjhangas*: mindfulness, seeking, effort, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and serenity), and thence to enlightenment and liberation itself. Ensuing *suttas* go on to underline that the inner concentration acquired by practising mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati samādhi*) leads to freedom from all fetters (*saṃyojana*), the uprooting of dormant tendencies (*anusaya*), full understanding of the path (*addhāna*), and the elimination of all impurities (*āsava*). Mindfulness of breathing is thus presented as a basic means of meditation whose goal is inner purification that leads all the way to the realization of *nibbāna*.

See also: **nimitta**, **satipaṭṭhāna**, **shǔxīguān**.

1. E.g. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:105, *PTSV* p.110.
2. See also *Majjhima Nikāya* 10, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.56.
3. See also *Samyutta Nikāya* 54:1–20, *Ānāpāna Samyutta*, *PTSS5* pp.314–41.
4. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:145–244, *PTSV* pp.266–93.
5. *Samyutta Nikāya* 54:8, *Dīpa Sutta*, *PTSS5* p.317; cf. *CDBB* p.1770.
6. *Samyutta Nikāya* 54:13–20, *Ānāpāna Samyutta*, *PTSS5* pp.328–41.

ānāpāna-smṛiti (S) *Lit.* mindfulness (*smṛiti*) of in-breathing (*āna*) and out-breathing (*apāna*). See **ānāpānasati**.

anattānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of not-self (*anattā*). See **anupassanā**.

aniccānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of impermanence (*anicca*). See **anupassanā**.

animittānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of the signless (*animitta*). See **anupassanā**.

antardhyān(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* inner (*antar*) contemplation (*dhyāna*); profound or deep meditation. See **dhyāna**.

anupassanā (Pa), **anupashyanā** (S), **rjes su lta ba** (T), **xúnguān** (C), **junkan** (J) *Lit.* contemplation, consideration, reflection; to practise (*xún*) contemplation (*guān*); to scrutinize carefully (*rjes su lta ba*); in Buddhism, the act of contemplating on different subjects for the purpose of developing spiritual insight (*vipassanā*) – for seeing things for what they really are without being deluded by appearances.

The different forms of *anupassanā* appear in several collections in the Pali *suttas* and elsewhere, listed as seven, ten, or eighteen *vipassanās*. They are also found as the four *satipaṭṭhānas*: contemplation of the body (*kāyānupassanā*); contemplation of sensations or sensory-mental processes (*vedanānupassanā*); contemplation of the mind or consciousness (*cittānupassanā*); and contemplation of the *dhammas* (*dhammānupassanā*). These four *anupassanās* encompass the four areas of human experience in which constant mindfulness should be cultivated by means of specific meditational practices.¹

The insight (*vipassanā*) cultivated by these *anupassanās* can be either intellectual or real. Intellectual insight implies that, by means of *anupassanā*, the practitioner has considered the matter so thoroughly and persistently that the spiritual perspective has become ingrained and habitual. Nevertheless, this is still only a limited understanding. True or real spiritual insight is to bring the thinking processes to a standstill through concentration (*samādhi*), and to raise the consciousness inwardly to the point where human beings, the universe and its processes can be seen clearly for what they are. This is essential or mystical *vipassanā*, and it requires ascent through the *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption) that are experienced in *rūpaloka* (world of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes) and *arūpaloka* (formless world) – worlds or realms of consciousness that correspond to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology. The depth of *anupassanā* and the resulting *vipassanā* varies from individual to individual.

The eighteen *anupassanās* refer to the “eighteen principal insights (*vipassanā*)” listed in Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*:

‘Eighteen principal insights (*vipassanā*)’ is a term for understanding that consists in the kinds of insight (*vipassanā*) beginning with contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*). Now, as regards these:

1. One who cultivates the contemplation of impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*) relinquishes the notion of permanence (*nicca-saññā*).
2. One who cultivates the contemplation of suffering (*dukkhānupassanā*) relinquishes the notion of (true) happiness (*sukha-saññā*).
3. One who cultivates the contemplation of not-self (*anattānupassanā*) relinquishes the notion of self (*atta-saññā*).
4. One who cultivates the contemplation of disenchantment (*nibbidānupassanā*) relinquishes delighting (*nandī*).
5. One who cultivates the contemplation of dispassion (*virāgānupassanā*) relinquishes passion (*rāga*).
6. One who cultivates the contemplation of cessation (*nirodhānupassanā*) relinquishes origination (*samudāya*).
7. One who cultivates the contemplation of renunciation (*paṭinissaggānupassanā*) relinquishes clinging (*ādāna*).

8. One who cultivates the contemplation of decay (*khayānupassanā*) relinquishes the notion of solid reality (*ghana-saññā*).
9. One who cultivates the contemplation of dissolution (*vayānupassanā*) (of transient things) relinquishes accumulation (*āyūhana*) (of *kamma*).
10. One who cultivates the contemplation of change (*vipariṇāmānupassanā*) relinquishes the notion of lastingness (*dhuva-saññā*).
11. One who cultivates the contemplation of the signless (*animittānupassanā*) relinquishes the sign (*nimitta*, the outer appearance).
12. One who cultivates the contemplation of the desireless (*appaṇihitānupassanā*) relinquishes desire (*paṇidhi*).
13. One who cultivates the contemplation of emptiness (*suññatānupassanā*) relinquishes misinterpretation (*abhinivesa*).
14. One who cultivates insight into states that comprise higher understanding (*adhipaññādharmā-vipassanā*) relinquishes misinterpretation arising from grasping at the (seeming) core (*sārādānābhinivesa*).
15. One who cultivates knowledge and vision of the true nature of things (*yathābhūta-nāṇa-dassana*) relinquishes misinterpretation arising from confusion (*sammohābhinivesa*).
16. One who cultivates the contemplation of tribulation (*ādīnavānupassanā*) relinquishes misinterpretation arising from attachment (*ālayābhinivesa*).
17. One who cultivates the contemplation of meditation (*paṭisankhānupassanā*) relinquishes non-meditation (*appaṭisankhā*).
18. One who cultivates the contemplation of turning away (*vivaṭṭānupassanā*) (from the cycle of rebirth) relinquishes misinterpretation arising from bondage (*saṃyogābhinivesa*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 20:90, PTSV pp.629–30; cf. PPVM p.655

Vipassanā means insight, specifically, spiritual or mystical insight. By contemplating on these spiritual truths, the practitioner develops spiritual insight

into their meaning. The subjects of the first three *anupassanās* are standard Buddhist doctrine concerning the basic facts or characteristics of existence. By contemplation on impermanence (*aniccānupassanā*), the meditator becomes more aware of the implications of the continuous change he sees around and within himself, and he overcomes his incorrect notion of the permanent nature of things. By contemplation on suffering (*dukkhānupassanā*), he realizes that all beings in this world are in pain and distress, to a greater or lesser extent, and he overcomes his incorrect notion that true happiness can be found in the external world. By contemplation on the absence of a permanent self or identity, he comes to realize that what he thought was his individuality is actually an illusion that continually shifts and changes. As a result of persistent consideration of these facts, the meditator abandons his incorrect perceptions concerning life and the material world, and all notions resulting from them. This is the beginning of spiritual insight, of *vipassanā*.

The process is the same for the other *anupassanās* and *vipassanās*. The realization that everything changes and passes away leads to aversion or disenchantment (*nibbidā*) with the world. This is still an attachment, though of a negative kind, and in this context *nibbidā* refers to diminishing interest in material things. Contemplation on disenchantment (*nibbidānupassanā*) leads to diminishing desire for and delight in material things. This in turn leads to dispassion or detachment (*virāga*). Contemplation on detachment (*virāgānupassanā*) results in the falling away of intense desire or “passion (*rāga*)” for anything in the world. Cessation (*nirodha*), in this context, means that thoughts and feelings cease to arise or originate in the mind. Renunciation (*paṭinissagga*), as a mental attitude, means that the practitioner no longer tries to grasp at or cling on to things, but lets them come and go, according to the natural flow of life.²

These seven realizations, insights or attitudes arise from practice of the first seven *anupassanās*, and can be understood in the context of anything in human experience, physical or mental. The first seven are mentioned throughout the Pali canon, the first three often appearing together. As arranged in the *Abhidhamma*, these seven represent a distinct series, to which the remainder have been added, and whose meaning may perhaps be less obvious. Buddhaghosa explains that contemplation of the signless (*animittānupassanā*) is the same as the contemplation of impermanence. The sign (*nimitta*), here, refers to the outward appearance of something, to something individual and distinguishable. This is an illusion, since ultimately everything perceivable is subject to change and has no permanent reality. This is also the same as the contemplation of change (*vipariṇāmanupassanā*) and the contemplation of the constant decay (*khayānupassanā*) and disintegration that is a natural aspect of material existence. Similarly, contemplation of the dissolution and decay (*vayānupassanā*) of all things leads to a desire not to accumulate more *kamma* (S. *karma*), for *kamma* brings one back into transmigration.

Again, the contemplation of suffering is the same as the contemplation of desire (*appaṇihitānupassanā*), because suffering arises from desire.

Likewise, contemplation of not-self (*anattānupassanā*) and contemplation of Emptiness or the Void (*suññatānupassanā*) come to the same thing, because when the illusion of individuality is relinquished, what remains is the Void (*Suññatā*), the great Emptiness that is Reality, according to Buddhist metaphysical descriptions.

Buddhaghosa also points to several misinterpretations or misunderstandings of the way things are that can be countered by contemplation of the Void or of Reality itself, as the starting point. If Reality itself is fully apprehended, then nothing can be misunderstood. One who cultivates this higher insight (*adhipaṇṇādharmā-vipassanā*) no longer seeks answers by grasping at relative or apparent realities. Seeing the true nature of things, he is no longer confused. Realizing that constant turmoil and tribulation are an inherent aspect of all material affairs, he loses all attachment to them. Contemplating the need for and benefits of meditation (*paṭisankhānupassanā*), he relinquishes any idea that such meditation has no benefit and that consideration of these great truths has no benefit. And finally, contemplating his escape from the round of birth and death, he is freed from misunderstandings that arise from the bondage of *kamma* (S. *karma*).

Buddhaghosa's essential thesis is that the profound consideration of these topics leads to the development of spiritual insight (*vipassanā*). The practices he recommends are in the nature of discursive reflections or meditations on the various topics, rather than exercises in contemplative concentration. His suggested methodology is to take passages from the *suttas* as texts for deep reflection, and to meditate upon them in an orderly and disciplined manner so that the truths they represent sink into the mind and completely influence one's perception of life. He recommends that the practitioner should look to the "elimination of negativities as they arise". He should practise "carefully" and "perseveringly", "adopting profitable means", and "proceeding with concentration". He should invoke the "seven factors that lead to enlightenment (*bojjhanga*)", learn to "disregard body and life", overcome discomfort by renunciation (*nekkhamma*) and dedication to the spiritual life, and should "not stop halfway". He should avoid "unprofitable things" and welcome "profitable things", and should alternate between reflection on "what is material and what is not material".³ The seven *bojjhanga*s to be borne in mind are: mindfulness, seeking, effort, rapture, tranquillity, concentration, and serenity.

Understanding 'contemplation' to mean thinking about and reflecting on something, the Burmese Buddhist professor Mehm Tin Mon observes that true *anupassanā* is pure awareness of the higher Reality, rather than consideration and acceptance of it, however deep that reflection may be. He also recommends a method of practice intended to help awaken this higher perception:

‘Contemplation’ implies ‘deep thought’ or ‘to be in a thoughtful state’. In *vipassanā* meditation there is no place for thinking or for being thoughtful. With the help of concentration (*samādhi*), one penetrates into the ultimate realities and sees with one’s own mind-eye the real nature of these realities....

By observing the incessant arising and dissolving of ... *nāma* (mental processes) and *rūpa* (form, *i.e.* bodily processes), one understands the impermanent nature as well as the unsatisfactory nature of mental and corporeal formations. To be subject to incessant dissolving itself means suffering. Since the body and mind are made up of five aggregates (*khandhas*) and all these aggregates are incessantly forming and dissolving, leaving no single entity as permanent, one realizes that there is no self nor soul.

Thus in *vipassanā bhāvanā* (*vipassanā* meditation), one actually sees the ultimate things and knows their nature. This ultimate nature cannot be known by mere contemplation.

In *aniccānupassanā*, one concentrates on the impermanent nature of ... *nāma* and *rūpa*, and repeats continuously, “*anicca, anicca, anicca, ...*” for ten to thirty minutes at a stretch.

Mehm Tin Mon, Buddha Abhidhamma, BAUS p.396

Likewise, he counsels, the two other primary *anupassanās* can also be practised. Further on he advises rotation of the practice of *aniccānupassanā*, *dukkhānupassanā* and *anattānupassanā* (contemplation of impermanence, suffering, and the absence of self), performing each in turn, one after the other, for short periods of time:

According to the experience of Pa-auk Tawya yogis (the Pa-auk Tawya is a monastery of the Burmese Forest Tradition), the long chain of arising and dissolving of the mental and corporeal phenomena is so distinct that they just watch the arising and the dissolving of the phenomena and meditate on them by way of *aniccānupassanā* for ten to fifteen minutes, then by way of *dukkhānupassanā* for another ten to fifteen minutes, and again by way of *anattānupassanā* for ten to fifteen minutes.

As they keep on meditating and rotating the *anupassanās* in turn, their ability to investigate the three characteristic marks of *nāma* and *rūpa* become better and better until they are able to see the arising instant, the existing instant, and the dissolving instant of each *nāma* and *rūpa*.

Mehm Tin Mon, Buddha Abhidhamma, BAUS pp.415–16

See also: **kāyānupassanā, satipaṭṭhāna, vipassanā.**

1. See **satipaṭṭhāna**.
2. See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli, on *Visuddhimagga* 20:4, *PTSV* p.607, *PPVM* pp.632–33 (n.3).
3. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 20:21, *PTSV* p.613; cf. *PFVM* pp.740–41, *PPVM* p.639.

anuprekshā (S), **aṇuvekkhā** (Pk) *Lit.* to see (*īksh*) keenly (*pre*) repeatedly (*anu*); consideration, reflection, meditation, contemplation; pondering the import and meaning of something; used by *Digambara* Jains for deep and persistent reflection upon some particular topic; known to *Shvetāmbaras* as *bhāvanā* (meditation).

Twelve *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās* are generally listed, covering the principle aspects of Jain philosophy, with a focus on the poor quality of life in the realm of transmigration. Topics include *karma*, rebirth, the transience of life, equanimity, renunciation, wisdom, liberation, *etc.* The *anuprekshās* are intended to develop the contemplative faculty – to purify the mind and prepare it for the higher spiritual endeavour of *dhyāna* (contemplation, meditation).

Human thought processes are reflected in outer behaviour. According to Jain philosophy, *karma* is accumulated by both thought and action. Practice of the *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās* is therefore intended to change the mental attitude of the practitioner and prevent the entry of new *karma* as well as eliminating the old, in order to hinder or prevent the accretion of new karmic matter around the soul.

Of the various Sanskrit and Prakrit texts dealing with the *anuprekshās*, the earliest is probably the Prakrit, *Bārasa Aṇuvekkhā* ('Twelve Meditations'), by Āchārya Kundakunda (traditionally dated to C2nd–3rd CE). Another early exposition, ranking high among the various accounts of the *anuprekshās*, is contained in Somadeva Sūri's *Yashastilaka* (C10th CE), a spiritual and religious romance written in Sanskrit verse containing much information concerning the cultural, religious and spiritual milieu of early medieval India in the Deccan. The twelve *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās* (with some small variation in numbering between texts) are:

1. *Anitya anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the transience (*anityatva*) or non-eternal (*a-nitya*) nature of things, on the impermanence or transient nature of existence; meditation on the fact that everything is subject to change and decay, that nothing can provide peace except knowledge of the soul or true self:

Death, the destroyer of all, acts with equal effort on old and young, great and small. . . . Seeing things on all sides fall into the destructive fire of death, the virtuous, self-restrained man should strive to pursue

that line of conduct wherein death no longer manifests (*i.e.* liberation from birth and death).

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:105, 111; cf. YICH pp.298–99

Meditations may take the form of repeated, personally oriented statements such as, “Everything changes: things continually come into existence and pass away; trying to find happiness in things that constantly change can never be successful; nothing can bring lasting happiness except spiritual knowledge of the soul.” Meditation formulae for the other *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās* are similarly phrased.

The repetition of such formulae, when practised sincerely and with concentration, can have a profound purifying effect upon a person’s mind and emotions, helping to eliminate negative and worldly thinking. When frequently reiterated, such personal affirmations can help to provide a powerful impetus towards diligent efforts on the spiritual path.

2. *Asharaṇa anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on one’s helplessness (*asharaṇatva*), on the helplessness of the individual in the face of suffering, disease, old age, death, and so on; meditation on the lack of protection or refuge (*sharaṇa*) from death, pleasure, pain, success, failure, and all the many fruits of *karma*; consideration of the fact that nothing in this world can provide protection from death:

When your wealth is on the increase and your heart is bent on spending, everybody stands to attention before you. But, like a bird that flies away from a ship at sea, you have none to save you at the hour of death.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:112; cf. YICH p.299

3. *Saṃsāra anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the cycle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*), on how the cycle of death and rebirth has continued unceasingly for countless ages, and on how it is now time to make the effort necessary for escape; meditation on the plight of the soul, caught in the seemingly endless whirlpool of existence and transmigration, unable to find true or lasting peace and happiness until it escapes:

In the ocean of existence, the transmigrating soul leaves one body, the result of *karma*, and resorts to another. The cycle of existence, like an actress, deludes the soul with many a marvellous show.

When by chance wealth is acquired, health is absent. When there is health, longevity attended by wealth is lacking. Thus the process of birth and rebirth inflicts misery on the world with its mutually contradictory attributes.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:115–16, YICH p.300

4. *Ekatva anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on one's aloneness (*ekatva*), on the essential isolation of every human being as the architect of his own destiny; meditation on the individual's personal responsibility for the fruits of his actions, on having to face the pleasant and unpleasant events of life on his own, and on the fact that the individual must make his own personal effort in quest of moral improvement and spiritual evolution, since no one else can do this for him:

You undergo birth and death, all alone, to suffer the consequences of your own deeds. You have no companion in happiness or misery. Only a crowd of parasites gathers round you to make their living.

Let alone your external possessions, even your body, . . . will not accompany you at death. Why do you go on suffering from such fetters of delusion as wife and children, wealth and home, which appear and disappear in a moment?

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:119–20; cf. YICH p.301

5. *Prīthaktva* or *anyatva anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the distinction (*anyatva*) between the body and the soul, on the separation (*prīthaktva*) of the individual, incarnate soul (*jīva*) from the true soul; meditation on the fact that the world and everything in it, as well as one's sense of personal identity, are all distinct from one's true self or soul, are not a part of one's possessions, and that it is a delusion to think otherwise:

Never imagine that you are composed of the body, because the body is utterly different from these. You are all consciousness, an abode of virtue and bliss; whereas the body, because it is inert, is an unconscious mass.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:123; cf. YICH p.301

6. *Ashuchitva anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the essential impurity (*ashuchitva*) of the body and all that nourishes it; consideration of the body as the playground of past *karmas*; meditation concerning the inherently pure nature of the soul, which has come into close contact with the body and its impurities:

Whatever is beautiful becomes unclean in a moment when applied to the body to lend it charm. Infatuated with your complexion, why do you, O soul, cherish this perishable frame, beset with cavities of dirt?

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:127; cf. YICH p.302

7. *Āshrava anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the influx (*āshrava*) of karmic matter into the soul as the result of human passions, imperfections, heedlessness, and lack of self-control; meditation on the fact that it is this

influx of karmic matter that is responsible for one's present situation and for suffering of various kinds:

With your heart contaminated by passions, you acquire *karma*, the cause of bondage, owing to your perseverance in performing evil deeds – just as an elephant forgetting himself in the company of his mate, earns for himself the ropes that bind him. Renounce, therefore, O sentient being, all your misdeeds.

Your heart is submerged in the ocean of desire, because it clings to the ever-productive tree of imagination. You gain nothing thereby, but only follow the path to sin.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:131–32; cf. YICH pp.302–3

8. *Samvara anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the various means of checking or stopping (*saṃvara*) the influx of karmic matter; meditation on how to stop the inflow of karmic matter by contemplation, by controlling the mind and senses, and by cultivation of the virtues:

A vigilant soul arrests the constant incoming dust of new *karma* through the helping hand of meditation, and by upholding the banner of the right faith. Good people of the world call this *saṃvara*, which benefits the soul. . . .

Just as a boat without holes and leaky joints safely traverses the ocean, defying the inrush of water, similarly the soul, with the vast burden of previous *karma* destroyed and the influx of new ones stopped, reaches the supreme goal.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:135, 137; cf. YICH p.303

9. *Nirjarā anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the means of elimination (*nirjarā*) of karmic matter; meditation on the truth that for liberation from the cycle of transmigration and for wisdom to dawn, past *karma* must be eliminated from the soul by means of contemplation and the twelve kinds of austerity (*tapas*):

You suffer, O miserable being, the consequences of the pain-bringing, ever-new sins you have committed, led astray by the pleasures of life, charming in the beginning but unpleasant at the end.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:142; cf. YICH p.304

10. *Loka anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on the universe (*lokavistāra*), on the nature of the relationship between soul and the universe, on the permanent rather than the created nature of the universe, and on the basic elements that comprise it; meditation on the reality that, in the grand scheme of things, an individual human being is essentially insignificant:

Composed of the upper, the middle and the lower regions, and bounded by the three atmospheres, and surmounted by the abode of liberated souls, the universe resembles a man in standing position (with outstretched legs), hands resting on the hips. Permanently established, it is your abode, its womb filled with living creatures....

When your mind is beset with sin, you are born in hell or as some lower animal. You are born in heaven when you have spiritual merit, and among mankind as a result of virtue and sin. Thus you live in the three worlds. The universe exists for your wanderings at will.

There is no place in the entire universe, O soul, which you have not repeatedly enjoyed and left. But not even out of curiosity have you ever approached the place whence all *karma* is banished.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:138, 140–41; cf. YICH pp.303–4

11. *Bodhi-durlabha anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on *bodhi* (wisdom, enlightenment), on the difficulty of attaining perfect enlightenment (*bodhi-durlabha*), perfect faith, and perfect conduct; meditation on the difficulty of finding the right path to enlightenment – of obtaining right guidance and true wisdom:

Adrift on the ocean of transmigration, a sentient creature is born by chance as a human being. Even then, birth in a family respected by the world and association with the good are as rare as a quail coming within the grasp of a blind man.

Released after much suffering from birth in the plant world, a sentient being is again born in the (various) hells on account of its sins; then among the animals, which are mutually hostile; and then again among uncouth men resembling animals.

Thus, in order to reap the consequences of one's deeds, one has to turn the water wheel of transmigration, bounded by the vessels of prosperity and adversity, overflowing with the waters of suffering, and furnished with the expansive cords of sin, with the hub of the wheel rotating in the river of the four conditions of existence.

He who wastes his human birth, obtained only after much longing, in thoughts of disease, sorrows, fear, pleasures, wife and children, might as well consign a heap of jewels to the flames for the sake of the ashes. Verily, his soul is blackened by mighty ignorance.

May *bodhi* (wisdom) lead a man with faith to that exalted state, namely, liberation. He who is averse to worldly phenomena and eager for spiritual peace, is self-controlled, kind to all creatures, and fond of the truth – his heart devoted to the inner Self!

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:153–57; cf. YICH pp.306–7

12. *Dharma anuprekshā* or *bhāvanā*. Reflection on *dharma* (spiritual virtue); meditation on the right path (*dharma-svākhyā-tattva*), and the real nature of Truth and the path to liberation, as revealed by the twenty-four *Tīrthankaras* (Jain preceptors):

Intent on faith, and discarding external activities, the self – desiring the twin results of heaven and salvation – cultivates within itself *dharma*, laying its foundation with the water of the knowledge of the fundamental principles. The wise call *dharma* a plant with the properties of nectar.

Dharma, productive of salvation as well as worldly joys, can be easily attained by men who delight in the exercise of good will, kindness, self-control, and forbearance; whose minds are free from sensual cravings; and who have destroyed the spectre of ignorance with the light of knowledge.

Somadeva, Yashastilaka 2:145–46; cf. YICH p.305

These twelve *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās* are regarded as one of the most important aspects of Jainism, to be repeatedly revisited, so that they become a part of one's understanding of life. The purpose of such reflection is to create an atmosphere and framework within which a person can live a spiritual life, and at the same time work towards liberation of the soul by checking the further influx of karmic matter into the soul. The *anuprekshās* are intended to provide a sound basis for true inner contemplation.

Anuprekshā is also the fourth of the five stages leading to complete conviction and certainty (*niḥshanka*). These five stages are *vāchanā* (lesson, learning, recitation of scriptures), *paripṛichchhana* (questioning), *parāvartanā* (repeated learning), *anuprekshā* (considering what has been learnt), and *dharma-kathā* (expressing clearly what has been learnt).

See also: **anussati**, **bhāvanā**.

anussati (Pa), **anusmṛiti** (S), **rjes su dran pa** (T), **niàn** (C), **nen** (J) *Lit.* recollection, remembrance; reflection, meditation, contemplation, mindfulness; pondering over the meaning and import of topics regarded as particularly worthy of consideration; also, meditative ability, such as the recollection of past lives (*pubbe-nivāsānussati*), which is regarded as one of the supernormal powers (*abhiññās*); specifically, a set of either three, five, six or ten recollections or topics, which according to the Pali *suttas* were taught by the Buddha; ten recollections grouped together in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the *suttas*) and related literature as part of the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) commonly mentioned in the *Theravāda* tradition.

The purpose of practising these recollections is to absorb the qualities on which the mind is focused, so that one may progress on the path of spiritual purification and perfection towards *nibbāna* and liberation from transmigration. Practice of the recollections provides positivity and inspiration, and impresses upon the mind what is good and helpful (*kusala*) and what is bad and unhelpful (*akusala*). The *anussatis* do not, of themselves, lead to *nibbāna*, but they are regarded as a part of the path towards it.

The Pali *suttas* cover the *anussatis* only briefly,¹ but they receive a detailed elaboration in Buddhaghosa's classic work, the *Visuddhimagga*. He begins his description with comments such as, "One who wants to cultivate the recollection of ... should go into solitary retreat in a favourable abode and recollect ...". Summarizing and quoting Buddhaghosa,² with extracts from the Pali *suttas*, the first six recollections are:

1. *Buddhānussati*. Recollection of the Buddha or Tathāgata; meditation on the many attributes of the Buddha – his qualities, virtues, lack of imperfections, clear vision, knowledge of all things, and so on. According to the *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*:

Bhikkhus (monks), a noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*) recollects the Tathāgata thus: "The Blessed One is a worthy one (*arahanta*), a perfectly awakened one (*sammā-sambuddha*), consummate in knowledge and conduct (*vijjā-caraṇa-sampanna*), one who has gone the right way (*sugata*), knower of the universe (*lokavid*), incomparable teacher of those who can be taught (*anuttara-purisa-damma-sārathi*), teacher of gods and men (*sattā-deva-manussānaṃ*), the Awakened One (*Buddha*), the Blessed One (*Bhagavant*). ..."

Whenever a noble disciple recollects the Tathāgata, at that time his mind is not obsessed by lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), or delusion (*moha*); at that time his mind is simply upright (*ujugata*). He has left greed (*gedha*) behind, freed himself from it, emerged from it. 'Greed (*gedha*)', *bhikkhus*, is a designation for the five objects of sensual pleasure (the five senses). Having made this a basis, some beings here are purified in this manner.

Anguttara Nikāya 6:25, *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTS3 p.312; cf. *NDBB* p.883

The *Mahānāma Sutta* adds:

With upright mind the noble disciple attains understanding of the meaning, understanding of the *Dhamma*, joy in the *Dhamma*. When he is joyful, rapture arises. With mind enraptured, his body becomes still. Still in body, he feels happiness; and the mind of the happy one becomes concentrated (*samādhiyati*). Of this noble disciple, it is said

that he dwells in balance among those who are unbalanced, that he abides free from suffering among those who are suffering. And this having entered the stream of the *Dhamma*, he develops the recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*).

Anguttara Nikāya 6:10, *Mahānāma Sutta*, PTSA3 p.285;

cf. ANTB, NDBB pp.862–63, in PBD pp.43–45

And Buddhaghosa elaborates:

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*), he is respectful and deferential towards the master. He attains fullness of faith, mindfulness, understanding, and merit. He has much happiness and gladness. He conquers fear and dread. He is able to endure pain. He comes to feel as if he were living in the master's presence. And his body, when the recollection of the Buddha's (*buddhānussati*) special qualities dwells in it, becomes as worthy of veneration as a shrine room. His mind tends toward the plane of the *buddhas*. When he encounters an opportunity for transgression, he has awareness of conscience and shame as vivid as though he were face to face with the master. And if he ascends no higher, he will at least be bound for a happy destination (after death).

Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:67, PTSV pp.212–13; cf. PPVM p.209

2. *Dhammānussati*. Recollection of the *Dhamma* (path and teachings); meditation on the qualities of the *Dhamma* – that it is well expounded, is good in every detail, inspires virtue, leads to the elimination of imperfections, invites examination, is full of meaning, proclaims the noble path leading to *nibbāna*, is pure and perfect, is available to follow and realize here and now, is complete in itself, requires no faith in any other path or person, produces immediate fruits and experience, brings the bliss of tranquillity and insight, and so on.³ The *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta* repeats the same formula as for recollection of the Buddha:

A noble disciple recollects the *Dhamma* thus: “The *Dhamma* is well expounded by the Blessed One, directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise.” When a noble disciple recollects the *Dhamma*, at that time his mind ... etc. (as previously).

Anguttara Nikāya 6:25, *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSA3 p.312, NDBB p.883

The *Mūluposatha Sutta* adds:

“Well-expounded by the blessed one is the *Dhamma*, understandable here and now, with immediate fruit, inviting one to come and see,

to be realized by the wise, each for himself.” As he is recollecting the *Dhamma*, his mind is calmed, and joy arises; the defilements of his mind are abandoned. . . . This is how the defiled mind is cleansed through the proper technique.

Anguttara Nikāya 3:70, *Mūluposatha Sutta*,
PTSA1 pp.207–8; cf. ANTB, in PBD p.43

And Buddhaghosa elaborates:

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of the *Dhamma* (*dhammānussati*), he thinks: “I never in the past met a master who taught a *dhamma* that led onward like this, who possessed this talent, nor do I now see any such a master other than the Blessed One.” Seeing the *Dhamma*’s special qualities in this way, he is respectful and deferential towards the master. He entertains great reverence for the *Dhamma*, and attains fullness of faith, and so on. . . . He comes to feel as if he were living in the *Dhamma*’s presence. . . . His mind tends towards the realization of the peerless *Dhamma*.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:88, PTSV p.218; cf. PPVM p.215

3. *Sanghānussati*. Recollection of the *sangha* (community of Buddhists); meditation on the qualities of the *sangha*. According to the *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*:⁴

A noble disciple recollects the *sangha* thus: “The *sangha* of the Blessed One’s disciples is practising the good way, . . . the upright way, . . . the true way, . . . the proper way. . . . This *sangha* of the Blessed One’s disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the unsurpassed field for performing meritorious deeds.” When a noble disciple recollects the *sangha*, at that time his mind . . . *etc.* (as previously).

Anguttara Nikāya 6:25, *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSA3 pp.312–13;
cf. NDBB p.883, PBD pp.43–44

Buddhaghosa elaborates that such recollection is “good”, since it is right, and those who have enjoyed its fruits “have realized what should be realized”. It is the “upright way” because it is the immaculate way of the well-expounded *Dhamma*, avoiding extremes, and relinquishing “bodily and verbal crookedness, tortuousness, and warpedness”. It is true, because “*nibbāna* is what is called the True, and the *sangha* has entered on the Way with *nibbāna* as its aim.” The *sangha* is also to be recollected as worthy of receiving gifts, hospitality, offerings and reverential greetings, and as the best place in the world for acquiring merit.⁵ He continues:

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of the *sangha* (*sanghānussati*), he is respectful and deferential towards the *sangha*. . . . He comes to feel as if he were living in the *sangha*'s presence. And his body, when the recollection of the *sangha*'s special qualities dwells in it, becomes as worthy of veneration as an *uposatha* house where the *sangha* has met. His mind tends towards the attainment of the *sangha*'s special qualities.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:100, PTSV p.221; cf. PPVM p.218

4. *Sīlānussati*. Recollection of one's own virtue; meditation on one's own virtue and morality, both in thought and practice, in order to become more virtuous. According to the *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*.⁶

A noble disciple recollects his own virtuous behaviour (*sīla*) as untorn, unrent, unblotched, unmottled, conducive to liberation, praised by the wise, untarnished, conducive to concentration. . . . When a noble disciple recollects his virtuous behaviour (*sīla*), at that time his mind . . . *etc.* (as previously).

Anguttara Nikāya 6:25, Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSa3 p.313;

cf. NDBB pp.883–84, PDB p.44

“Untorn, unrent, unblotched, unmottled” is interpreted by Buddhaghosa as various ways to describe perfection in virtue, without lapses. “Untorn” and “unrent” imply being completely free of imperfections, like a cloth that is neither ragged or torn. “Unblotched” and “unmottled” are similarly understood to imply an untarnished purity, unlike a cow that has various blotches and other markings on its body.⁷ He continues:

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of virtue (*sīlānussati*), he has respect for the training. He lives in communion (with his fellows in the life of purity). He is always courteous, devoid of such fears as self-reproach and so on, aware of the danger in his slightest fault, attains an abundance of faith and so on, and is abundantly rapturous and joyful. And if he ascends no higher, he will at least be bound for a happy destination.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:106, PTSV p.222; cf. PPV2 p.257, PPVM p.219

5. *Cāgānussati, dānānussati*. Recollection of generosity or liberality (*cāga, dāna*); meditation on generosity, both in thought and practice, in order to become more generous. According to the *Mahānāma Sutta*.⁸

The noble disciple recollects his own generosity (*cāga*) thus: “Truly blessed am I, highly blessed am I who, amid beings defiled with the

stain of stinginess, dwell with a heart free from stinginess – freely generous, open-handed, delighting in letting things go, devoted to charity, delighting in giving and sharing.” Whenever a disciple of the noble ones is recollecting generosity, at that time ... *etc.* (as previously).

Anguttara Nikāya 6:10, Mahānāma Sutta, PTSA5 p.287;

cf. ANTB, NDBB p.864, in PBD p.44

And Buddhaghosa elaborates:

One who wants to cultivate the recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*) should be devoted by nature to generosity and the constant practice of giving and sharing. Alternatively, if he is one who is starting the development of it, he should make the resolution: “From now on, when there is anyone present to receive, I shall not eat even a single mouthful without having given a gift.” And that very day he should give a gift by sharing according to his means and his ability with those who have distinguished qualities. ...

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of generosity (*cāgānussati*), he becomes ever more intent on generosity, his preference is for non-greed, he acts in conformity with lovingkindness, he is fearless. He has much happiness and gladness. And if he ascends no higher, he will at least be bound for a happy destination.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:107, PTSV p.223; cf. PPVM p.220

6. *Devatānussati*. Recollection of deities; meditation on the qualities associated with and leading to rebirth as a celestial being. According to the *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*:⁹

A noble disciple recollects the deities (*devatā*) thus: “There are *devas* in the retinue of the four great kings, *tāvatiṃsa-devas*, *yama-devas*, *tusita-devas*, *devas* who delight in creation, *devas* who control what is created by others, *devas* of *Brahmā*’s retinue, and *devas* still higher than these. I too have such faith as those deities possessed, because of which, when they passed away here, they were reborn there; I too have such virtuous behaviour, ... such learning, ... such generosity, ... such wisdom as those deities possessed, because of which, when they passed away here, they were reborn there.” When a noble disciple recollects the faith, virtuous behaviour, learning, generosity, and wisdom in himself and in those deities, at that time his mind is not overcome by lust, hatred, or delusion.

Anguttara Nikāya 6:25, Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSA3 pp.313–14;

cf. NDBB p.884, PDB p.44

And after repeating the *sutta* passages, Buddhaghosa concludes:

When a *bhikkhu* is devoted to this recollection of deities (*devatānussati*), he becomes dearly loved by deities. He obtains even greater fullness of faith. He has much happiness and gladness. And if he ascends no higher, he will at least be bound for a happy destination.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 7:118, PTSV p.226; cf. PPVM p.222

Four further recollections are listed in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, with discussions concerning the first three individually in several other places. More detailed discussion of all ten recollections is found in a number of texts, especially Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*.¹⁰

7. *Maraṇasati*. Mindfulness of death, so as to remember the transience and uncertainty of life.¹¹ See **marāṇasati**.

8. *Kāyagatāsati*. Mindfulness occupied with the body,¹² in order to become detached from it. According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the intention is for the associated *nimitta* (mental image) to form in the mind and become the basis of deeper internal concentration, leading to the first *jhāna*. See **kāyagatāsati**.

9. *Ānāpānasati*. Mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing, as a means of becoming mindful, and of stilling the mind and body.¹³ According to the *Visuddhimagga*, the intention is to invoke the arising of the associated *nimitta* (mental image), which is the basis of deeper internal concentration, leading into the four lower *jhānas* (states of meditative absorption). See **ānāpānasati**.

10. *Upasamānussati*. Recollection of the peace (*upasama*)¹⁴ and stillness of *nibbāna*, and its benefits such as the end of suffering, supreme bliss, freedom from transmigration and the consequent processes of aging, sickness, and death. Although inner peace and tranquillity are frequently mentioned in the Pali *suttas* as essential aspects of Buddhist aspirations, in only one place is *upasama* recommended as a focus for meditation, along with many other subjects for recollection or mindfulness. See **upasamānussati**.

According to the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the results of these practices of recollection or mindfulness are detachment, peace and mystical knowledge, leading to *nibbāna*:

Bhikkhus, there is one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to *nibbāna*. What is that one thing? Recollection of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*). This is

that one thing that, when developed and cultivated, leads exclusively to disenchantment, ... to *nibbāna*.

Anguttara Nikāya 1:296, *PTSA1* p.30, *NDBB* p.116

The same is then repeated for each of the other nine recollections.

According to Buddhaghosa, mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing can lead a practitioner into all four of the lower *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). Mindfulness of the body can lead to the first *jhāna*, while the remaining eight recollections and mindfulnesses can lead only as far as threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*). This limitation is because the practices keep the mind involved in a variety of thoughts, which – however elevated they may be – must be transcended before entry into the *jhānas*.¹⁵

See also: **anuprekshā**.

1. *E.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 6:9–10, 6:25, 11:11–12, *PTSA3* pp.284–88, 312–14, 329–34; *Dīgha Nikāya* 33 (*Saṅgīti Sutta*), 34 (*Dasuttara Sutta*), *PTSD3* pp.250, 280.
2. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7, *PTSV* pp.197–228; cf. *PPVM* pp.186–224.
3. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:68–87, *PTSV* pp.213–17.
4. See also *e.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 3:70, *Mūluposatha Sutta*, *PTSA1* p.208.
5. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:89–95, *PTSV* pp.218–20; cf. *PPVM* pp.215–17.
6. See also *e.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 3:70, *Mūluposatha Sutta*, *PTSA1* p.209.
7. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:101–2, *PTSV* pp.221–22.
8. See also *e.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 6:25, *Anussatiṭṭhāna Sutta*, *PTSA3* p.313.
9. See also *e.g. Anguttara Nikāya* 11:12, *Mahānāma Sutta*, *PTSA5* pp.331–32.
10. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7–8, *PTSV* pp.197–294; *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 32:442, *PTSP2* p.95.
11. *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:19–20 (*Paṭhama Maraṇasati Sutta*), 8:73–74 (*Paṭhama & Dutiya Maraṇasati Suttas*), *PTSA3* pp.303–8, *PTSA4* pp.316–20.
12. *Anguttara Nikāya* 1:575–615 (*Kāyagatāsati Vagga*), 9:11 (*Sāriputta Sihanāda Sutta*), *PTSA1* pp.43–45, *PTSA4* pp.374–77.
13. *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:96–98 (*Akappa Sutta*), 10:60 (*Girimānanda Sutta*), *PTSA3* pp.120–21, *PTSA5* pp.109–12; *Samyutta Nikāya* 54:10 (*Kimbila Sutta*), 54:13 (*Ānanda Sutta*), *PTSS5* pp.322–25, 328–33.
14. *Anguttara Nikāya* 1:305, 494, *PTSA1* pp.30, 42.
15. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:66, 87, 99, 105, 113, 117, 8:7, 24, 40, 143, 155, *PTSV* pp.212, 217, 221–22, 224–25, 230, 234, 238–39, 266, 269.

anuttara-yoga tantra (S), **bla na med pa'i rnal 'byor rgyud** (T) *Lit.* unexcelled (*anuttara*) *yoga tantra*; unsurpassable *yoga tantra*; the highest of the fourfold *tantras* according to the three ‘new (*gsmar ma*)’ schools (*Kagyü*, *Sakya*, and

Geluk) of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries CE, and which are among the principal forms of the *Vajrayāna* (esoteric or tantric) Buddhism; mainly practised in Tibet, where it is closely associated with the *Mahāmudrā* tradition.

Literally, *tantra* means treatise, but it has also come to mean the traditions and practices associated with the tantric texts. Although the secrecy shrouding tantric practices makes it difficult to ascertain their precise origin, it seems clear that they evolved from earlier yogic practices, to which they bear many resemblances.

The Sanskrit *anuttara-yoga tantra* is absent from Indian tantric Buddhist texts and is commonly regarded as a pseudo-Sanskrit term, reverse translated from the Tibetan. Both the Sanskrit and the Tibetan terms also indicate a comparative designation – ‘none (*an-*, *med*) higher (*uttara*, *bla*)’, rather than ‘highest’, indicating a nuance that is absent from the common English translation of ‘highest *yoga tantra*’.

The numerous tantric treatises (maybe around 2,000) exhibit many differences – great and small – and there have been many attempts to classify them. The least complicated classification is probably that of the four categories described by the ‘new’ schools:

1. *Kriyā tantra*, which emphasizes the practice of rituals (*kriyā*).
2. *Charyā tantra*, which emphasizes the practice (*charyā*) of a balance between *kriyā* and *yoga tantra*.
3. *Yoga tantra*, which focuses on yogic and meditative practices.
4. *Anuttara-yoga tantra*, which combines many elements of the other three.

According to the *Vajrapañjara Tantra* (‘Indestructible Refuge *Tantra*’):

The *kriyā tantra* is for the basest,
and *charyā tantra* is for those who are superior.
The *yoga tantra* is for the supreme among sentient beings,
and *anuttara-yoga tantra* is for those who are yet more superior.

Vajrapañjara Tantra, TOH419, in NSTI p.268

The first three categories also appear as the fourth to sixth stages of the nine-vehicle (*navayāna*) classification originated by the *Nyingma* (‘Old Translations’) school, who trace their origins to the eighth-century teacher and translator of Sanskrit texts, Padmasambhava.

Other categories include *mahāyoga* (great *yoga*), *anuyoga* (further *yoga*), and *atiyoga* (supreme *yoga*) – categories used by the *Nyingma* school, pre-dating *anuttara-yoga tantra*. However, classification of the many and varied tantric texts has been retrospective, and the various classificatory systems are not always in agreement. It is also unlikely that belonging to any particular

category was a part of the original authors' way of thinking, since such categories did not exist when the texts were written.

Anuttara-yoga tantra is itself divided into three categories: the male or father *tantras* (*pitṛi tantras*), the female or mother *tantras* (*māṭṛi, dākinī, or yoginī tantras*), and non-dual *tantras*. Although there are overlaps, each of these three categories is commonly said to be represented by a particular group of tantric texts and associated practices. The father *tantras*, exemplified by the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* ('Tantra of the Secret Assembly'), emphasize the initial or 'generation stage (*utpatti-krama*)' of tantric practice; the mother *tantras*, exemplified by the *Hevajra Tantra*, emphasize the 'completion (*nishpanna*)', final, or 'perfection (*sampanna*)' stage; and the non-dual *tantras* (numerically, the smallest group), exemplified by the later *Kālachakra Tantra*, combine elements of both the generation and the completion stages. *Hevajra* is the name of a principal enlightened being (*yi dam*) or meditational deity in the *Vajrayāna* tradition. Although there are many variations of doctrine and practice among tantric texts, the ultimate goal remains that of enlightenment (*bodhi*) and buddhahood.

In the 'generation stage', the practitioner visualizes the meditational deity (*yi dam*) or 'refuge tree' (a representation of the *gurus*' lineage in the form of a tree). The aim is to alter and enhance the perception of reality in a radical manner. The 'completion stage' includes yogic and associated tantric practices, the ultimate goal being enlightenment.

The early *Guhyasamāja Tantra* is credited with the introduction of explicit sexual symbolism. The *Hevajra Tantra* expands on the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, introducing sexual *yoga*, awareness and control of the body's system of subtle life energies (*prāṇas, nāḍīs, chakras, etc.*), and gives greater significance to the role of the feminine aspect. Although both the father and mother *tantras* lay emphasis on wisdom (*prajñā*) and method or technique (*upāya*), the father *tantras* emphasize practice over the attainment of wisdom, while the mother *tantras* emphasize the attainment of wisdom over method.

Proponents of *Vajrayāna* maintain that the tantric system includes that of the *Mahāyāna sūtras*. It is claimed that *Vajrayāna* in general, and *anuttara-yoga tantra* in particular, are superior to the system of the *sūtras*, which is known as *Sūtrayāna*. The practice of *tantra* is regarded as easier for both monks and laity, since it does not require practice of the strict austerities and renunciations promoted by the *sūtras*. Moreover, its wide availability to lay practitioners sets it apart from the conventional Buddhist practices reserved for ordained monks and nuns. Its methods are also varied to suit individual temperaments and, most importantly, liberation is believed to be possible during one's present lifetime, even in the absence of a full understanding of the *sūtras*. On the other hand, unlike the doctrines of *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, which are available to all through the scriptures and *sūtras*, the doctrines and practices of esoteric Buddhism are known only through secret

writings. In *anuttara-yoga tantra*, these are revealed to the select few during a sequence of four initiations (*abhisheka*), at which time empowerment is transmitted directly from teacher to disciple.

As a result of practising *anuttara-yoga tantra*, it is said that the ignorance and limited perception of a sentient being, which arises as a result of the accretions of the *karma* of many lifetimes, is purified and transformed into the clear light and wisdom of an enlightened being. A practitioner's sight and hearing become keen, and he perceives the world as infused by his chosen meditational deity. What he previously perceived as the ordinary sights and sounds of the world are transformed into visions of deities, *maṇḍalas*, and the sound of *mantras*; his mind is purified, and his thoughts and mental activities are transformed into the pure contemplation of an enlightened being.

The *sūtras* of the *Mahāyāna* tradition assert that the Buddha held back the *Mahāyāna* teachings until human beings were ready for them, some being held in trust by protective deities until the right moment. In a similar manner, according to traditional *Vajrayāna* belief, certain masters of the past, especially Padmasambhava (an Indian *siddha*, credited with introducing tantric Buddhism into Tibet), concealed certain objects and teachings for later discovery at the right moment in history by a *tertön* (*gter ston*, revealer, finder). A *tertön* is an inspired teacher who receives a revelation from a deity or spirit (especially *dākinīs*) concerning the *Dharma* (the Buddhist Way and teachings), and who has been guided thereby to find a text or object (*gterma*, hidden treasure) such as a relic hidden among rocks or in a cave. A *gterma* can also be a 'mind treasure' – a revelation or teaching that is manifested directly to the mind and consciousness of the *tertön*. In the case of *anuttara-yoga tantra*, the *tertön* would be an advanced tantric practitioner. Some believe that at the time of the historical Buddha particular tantric teachings were hidden for future discovery – an argument used to counter the charge that doctrines and practices that are absent from the Buddha's original teachings were the inventions of later times.

Like other schools of tantric Buddhism, *anuttara-yoga tantra* makes extensive use of practices (physical, verbal, and mental) based on the earlier *sūtras*. These practices include the use of rituals, meditation, visualization, breath control, hand gestures (*mudrās*), *maṇḍalas*, *yi dams* (meditational deities), recitation of *mantras* and *dhāraṇīs*, and sexual rituals.

See also: **abhisheka** (7.4), **nishpanna-krama**, **utpatti-krama**, **Vajrayāna** (►4).

anuyoga (S), **rjes su rnal 'byor** (T) *Lit.* further (*anu*) union (*yoga*); the second of the three *tantras* or *yogas* and the eighth of the nine-vehicle (S. *yāna*, T. *theg pa dgu*) classification of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan *Vajrayāna* or tantric Buddhism, the three *tantras* being *mahāyoga* (great *yoga*), *anuyoga*, and *atiyoga* (supreme *yoga*). See **navayāna**.

appaṇihitānupassanā(Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of the desireless (*appaṇihita*). See **anupassanā**.

arūpa-jhāna (Pa) *Lit.* meditative absorption (*jhāna*) in the formless (*arūpa*) realms; the four stages of *jhāna* experienced in the four realms of *arūpaloka*, also known as *arūpāyatana* (formless realm). According to Buddhist cosmology, *kāmaloka* (realm of desire) consists of eleven realms, which include the hellish, animal, human, and lower heavenly realms; *rūpaloka* has sixteen subdivisions, of which the upper five are accessible only to *arahantas* (enlightened ones) and *anāgāmis* (non-returners, who have escaped rebirth); and *arūpaloka* consists of four realms, making thirty-one in all. *Rūpaloka* (realm of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes) and *arūpaloka* would seem to be equivalent to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology. See **arūpāyatana**, **jhāna**.

arūpāyatana (Pa) *Lit.* formless (*arūpa*) realm (*āyatana*); the four immaterial or formless regions or divisions of *arūpaloka* (formless world), which is the world that lies above *rūpaloka* (world of forms, images, patterns, or archetypes); also called the *arūpa-jhānas* (formless or immaterial meditative absorptions), which emphasizes that these transcendental realms can also be understood as stages in meditation.

The four lower *jhānas* (meditative absorptions) of Buddhist *Theravāda* meditation, as described in the Pali *suttas* (discourses of the Buddha) are experienced as the meditator passes through *rūpaloka*. The four *arūpāyatanas* are taken as the subjects of meditation for attaining the four higher stages of meditative absorption. In the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the Pali *suttas*), they are also called the four higher *jhānas* or the *arūpa-jhānas*. The four *arūpāyatanas* are listed as four of the forty objects and themes (*kammaṭṭhāna*) that can be used for meditation. They are: *ākāsānañcāyatana* (realm of boundless space); *viññāṇañcāyatana* (realm of boundless consciousness); *ākīñcaññāyatana* (realm of no-thingness); and *nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana* (realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing). Meditation on the four *arūpāyatanas* leads the meditator to experience of the four immaterial or formless-realm absorptions (*arūpāyatana-jhānas* or *arūpāvacara-jhānas*), also known as the four immaterial attainments (*arūpa-samāpatti*).

In his *Visuddhimagga*, Buddhaghosa describes the method for entering the four higher *jhānas*. First, the four lower *jhānas* are approached and entered by means of a *kaṣiṇa* or meditation object. This may be a physical object such as a coloured disc, or an object representing earth or water, or something more abstract such as the air *kaṣiṇa* or mind *kaṣiṇa*. During meditation, the meditator forms a mental image (*nimitta*) of this *kaṣiṇa*, which – as concentration increases – is gradually transformed from the initial perception or preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*) to a bright and clear ‘access’ or

‘threshold’ image (*upacāra nimitta*), and finally to a self-luminous, fixed image (*appanā nimitta*), which coincides with entry into the first *jhāna*. With ever-deepening concentration, the meditator then successively attains the four *jhānas*. In this context, the mental image (*nimitta*) of the *kaṣiṇa* is also spoken of as the *kaṣiṇa*.

On reaching the fourth *jhāna*, Buddhaghosa describes how a similar process leads to the attainment of the first higher *jhāna*. In essence, the meditator realizes that even the subtle materiality of the four lower *jhānas* is to be transcended. As he deepens his inner concentration, the image of the *kaṣiṇa* ‘disappears’ and is replaced by the ‘space’ where the image used to be. By focusing on this ‘space’, all the while thinking, “space, space (*ākāsa, ākāsa*)”, the meditator enters the realm of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*).

Buddhaghosa describes the process in some detail. Picking up his account after the meditator has attained the fourth lower *jhāna*, has gained the fivefold mastery (*vasī*) over it¹ and has become aware of its limitations, he continues:

Emerging from the now-familiar fourth *jhāna* of the subtle material sphere, he sees the limitation of that *jhāna* in this way: “This *jhāna* makes its (meditation) object the materiality from which I have become detached.” ... When he has seen the limitation of that *jhāna* in this way and has ended his attachment to it, he gives his attention to the sphere of space (*ākāsa*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 10:5–6, PTSV p.327; cf. PPVM p.322

Buddhaghosa then explains that having mentally and internally expanded the image of the *kaṣiṇa* to fill the entire “world sphere or as far as he likes”, the meditator then “removes” the *kaṣiṇa* in the sense that he no longer gives attention to it:

He removes the *kaṣiṇa* by giving his attention to the space occupied by it, regarding that as ‘space’ or ‘boundless space’. When he is removing it, he neither folds it up like a mat nor withdraws it like a cake from a container. It is simply that he does not turn to it or give attention to it or review it, and it is when, in this way, he gives his attention exclusively to the space previously occupied by it, all the while repeating ‘space, space,’ that he is said to ‘remove the *kaṣiṇa*’. ... This is conceptualized simply as the space left by the removal of the *kaṣiṇa*. Whether it is called ‘space left by the removal of the *kaṣiṇa*’ or ‘space occupied by the *kaṣiṇa*’ or ‘space without the *kaṣiṇa*’, it is all the same.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 10:6–8, PTSV p.327; cf. PPVM p.322

The process Buddhaghosa describes is analogous to that of entering the first four *jhānas*, but is of a higher and more refined nature. The difference in concentration between the lower and the higher *jhānas* is that while the meditator had previously been looking at the image of the *kaṣiṇa* with his “eye of contemplation”, he is now mentally looking at the space that was previously occupied by that image:

There is, however, this difference. When the immaterial-sphere (*arūpāyatana*) consciousness has arisen in this way, the *bhikkhu*, who had been formerly looking at the *kaṣiṇa* disc with the eye of contemplation (*jhāna*), now finds himself looking at only space, after that image (*nimitta*) has been abruptly removed by the attention. . . . He is like a man who has plugged an opening in a (covered) vehicle, a sack or a pot with a piece of blue rag or with a piece of rag of some colour such as yellow, red or white and is looking at that, and then when the rag is removed by the force of the wind or by some other agency, he finds himself looking at the space (it previously occupied).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 10:11, PTSV p.328; cf. PPVM p.323

So Buddhaghosa concludes that with complete withdrawal of the attention from all gross and subtle matter, and from all the diversity that abounds therein, the meditator enters the realm of boundless space:

At this point it is said: “With the complete surmounting (*samatikkama*) of awareness of matter, with the disappearance of awareness of visible objects, with non-attention to awareness of multiplicity, aware only of ‘boundless space’, he enters and dwells in the realm of boundless space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*).”² . . . And here boundless should be understood as referring to the attention also, which is why it is said in the *Vibhanga*: “He places, settles his consciousness in that space, and he pervades it unboundedly.”³

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 10:12, 23, PTSV pp.328, 331; cf. PPVM pp.323, 326

Following a similar pattern, Buddhaghosa then goes on to describe the attainment of the other three formless realms.⁴

See also: **jhāna**.

1. See *vasī*.
2. *Vibhanga*, VCRD p.245.
3. *Vibhanga*, VCRD p.262.
4. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 10:25–55, PTSV pp.331–38, PPVM pp.326–33.

āsan(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* sitting, sitting down; seat, throne; sitting in a particular position or posture; from the Sanskrit *as* (to sit); the third aspect of Patañjali's *yoga*; commonly translated in *yoga* literature as posture, but carrying the connotation of ease and balance. Hindu deities and Buddhist *bodhisattvas* are commonly depicted in various *āsanas*. Traditionally, there are believed to be 8,400,000 *āsanas*, of which only eighty-four are known to man.

The *Vedāntasāra* defines *āsana*:

Āsana means the placing of the hands, feet and so on, in particular positions, like *padmāsana*, *svastikāsana*, and so on.

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 203; cf. *VSY* p.113

Broadly speaking, *āsanas* are intended for two purposes: firstly, as a stable position for meditation that is midway between the kind of comfort that might lead to drowsiness and the discomfort that might disturb concentration; secondly, as the means of gaining control over the body and its health, as in *haṭha yoga*, as it is normally practised in the West. Regarding the first of these, having listed *āsana* as one of the eight aspects of *yoga*, Patañjali goes on to say (briefly) what he means:

Posture (*āsana*) should be steady,
stable and comfortable.
By this means, tensions are relaxed,
and meditation on the Infinite becomes possible.
As a result, there are no assaults
from the pairs of opposites.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:46–48

The idea is that any posture chosen for meditation should be “stable and comfortable”. As a *Sāṃkhya sūtra* says:

Any posture that is comfortable (*sukha*) and steady (*sthira*) is an *āsana*.

Sāṃkhya Aphorisms of Kapila 3:34

Āsana also refers to a place of sitting. Hence the *Bhagavad Gītā* includes a suitable *āsana* among the prerequisites of the ideal lifestyle for the aspiring yogi:

Dwelling in solitude, disciplined in mind and body,
without hopes or expectations, without possessions –
Let the *yogī* steadfastly practise spiritual communion.

In a clean place, neither too high nor too low,
prepare a seat (*āsana*) out of grass,
covered with a skin and a cloth.

Firmly seated thereon, to purify the self (*ātman*),
practise *yoga*, making the mind one-pointed,
with the activity of the mind and senses under control.

Holding the body, head and neck
straight, motionless and firm;
Gazing at the tip of the nose and not all round;
Being without fear, serene, controlled in mind,
and established in a vow of celibacy;
Meditating upon Me as the highest goal,
he should sit in communion with Me.

Bhagavad Gītā 6:10–14

The traditional posture for yogic meditation is *padmāsana* (lotus posture), sometimes called *dhyānāsana* (contemplation posture). The practitioner sits cross-legged with the left foot on the right thigh, and the right foot on the left thigh. The soles of the feet are turned upward, and the hands or wrists are placed on the knees. In this way, the body is locked into a firm and stable position. With allowance for its natural curvature, the back is held erect, and the eyes are partially or fully closed. Though it may be uncomfortable at first, due to tension in the muscles and tendons, these slowly lengthen and accommodate themselves to the position. When mastered, the mind seems more composed, and the posture feels conducive to meditation. However, straining to achieve and maintain any posture is counterproductive, and is not recommended.

Since meditation is physically passive, a sitting posture is the natural choice for its practice. As Huston Smith observes:

Given that standing induces fatigue, chairs invite slumping and reclining encourages sleep, there may be no other position in which the body can remain for long at a stretch, both still and alert.

Huston Smith, World's Religions, WRHS p.45

Bearing in mind the health, age, cultural background and so on of their disciples, many teachers advise that practitioners of meditation should choose any position that keeps them alert, with their backs straight. Ideally, the practitioner should not support his back against a wall or chair. For this purpose, an ordinary cross-legged position is often recommended. The intention is that the posture should be comfortable without inducing sleep, and should promote mental alertness. Since it is the consciousness that does the meditation, the posture should be such that the body can be forgotten. A posture that can be maintained for a long period of time without any movement should therefore be adopted. If a practitioner is unable to remain motionless in one position, changing it frequently, the currents of attention that are spread throughout the body and the world cannot gather together at the focus of concentration.

Once selected and used habitually for meditation, the chosen posture will automatically induce a mood for meditation, by association. Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990) says:

As far as changing the posture is concerned, we should first find a posture which suits us. Then we should try to sit in that posture as long as we can. When it becomes very uncomfortable, very uneasy and you just can't sit still, then it is better to change than to fight with yourself. Because if you start fighting to retain that posture, then naturally your attention is fighting with the body to retain the posture, and your mind is scattered. Then it is much better to walk two or three minutes and to sit again in the same posture. But we should try to sit as much as we can in that particular posture without disturbing ourselves.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 41, DTL p.78

And:

Spiritual advantage will be in the concentration. If your concentration is all right, you will get all the spiritual advantages, whether you are sitting in the Indian posture or in any other posture. Ultimately, you forget in what posture you are sitting and whether or not you are even in the body. You have to forget your body. You have not even to be conscious of what position you are sitting in; and unless you come to that stage, you cannot become one with the divine Melody within.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 44, DTL pp.81–82

Āsanās are also practised purely as a means of achieving physical health, relaxation, and mental well-being. Generally known as *haṭha yoga*, eighty-four *āsanas*, usually combined with breath control (*prāṇāyāma*), are commonly described and taught. As well as strengthening, toning, relaxing and exercising all parts of the body, *āsanas* such as these significantly enhance the balanced flow of subtle life energy (*prāṇa*) in the body, helping to generate a positive outlook, a healthy energetic body, and a concentrated mind. The various organs, blood vessels, nervous and other systems of the body are kept in a healthy condition, food is well digested, and respiration becomes regular.

Certain *āsanas* are especially helpful for particular ailments:

Posture signifies sitting in a particular position and maintaining it firmly for a certain length of time. *Haṭha yoga* describes numerous postures, and of these, eighty-four are well known. The practice of these postures confers many advantages because they are an aid to concentration. They help to eliminate all bodily ailments and weaknesses. The organs, veins and arteries remain healthy and vigorous.

There is no loss of heat in the solar plexus. The food is well digested and the respiration is regular. By this practice, the body is brought under control. Further, a number of other advantages also accrue, such as concentration, clarity of thought, deep insight, etc.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters, PMS1 p.42

The origins of the *āsanas* are not known, but it is likely that they were developed by yogis who – through breath control and meditation upon the six subtle *chakras* or centres of pranic energy within the human body – had seen, with their inner vision, the vast network of channels (*nāḍīs*) of *prāṇa*. These *nāḍīs* administer the organization of the body from a subtle level, and generally make life possible. *Prāṇa* is the stepped-down energy of the primal divine creative power or energy, as it appears in the human body below the *ājñā chakra* or eye centre. It is the hidden intelligence that administers the complex regulation of bodily processes.

As well as exercising the muscles and tissues of the body, keeping them supple, the various *āsanas* are designed to purify and enhance the free and balanced flow of the *prāṇa* in the *nāḍīs*, thereby maintaining health. For yogis who had retired from the world to lead lives of solitary meditation, the *āsanas* provided an efficient and effective system of exercise and health maintenance that was compatible with their meditative lifestyle.

The number of *āsanas* and their variants is unknown, but in 2008, in response to the attempt to patent *yoga* postures (one hundred and thirty *yoga*-related US patents were documented in 2007 alone), the Indian government formed a panel of *gurus*, government officials and two hundred scientists to register all known *āsanas* in a public database. Working from thirty-five ancient texts, by 2010, the panel had identified nine hundred *āsanas* and their variations, which has duly been made available to patent examiners, demonstrating that *āsanas* are public knowledge, and therefore non-patentable.¹

As a means of attaining God-realization, *āsanas* by themselves have no value. Disciplining the body does not lead the mind and soul to God. The ability to sit in any particular bodily posture has no inherent spiritual value. This becomes clear at the time of death when the body is left behind. But since many ascetics and yogis in India have practised *āsanas* in the hope of attaining spiritual benefit, Indian saints have felt it necessary to point out that *āsanas* do not help on the path to God. Identifying himself with the yogis, Guru Arjun writes:

I practised *yoga*, like a *siddha*,
with all its eighty-four postures (*āsan*);
And achieved a long life, but met not with my God,
and was cast into the womb again and over again.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 642, AGG

And speaking of attaining the stage of *nirvāṇa*, Sahajobāi says:

Do those actions by which you will reach *nirbān pad* . . .
 Restrict yourself to one *āsana*,
 and attain concentration.

Sahajobāi, Bānī, Kuṇḍaliyān 5:2, SBB p.42

See also: **haṭha yoga**.

1. See “asana,” *Wikipedia*, ret. November 2011.

asceticism (Gk. *askēsis*) The principles and practice of an ascetic life; the behaviour, discipline, or perspective of an ascetic; the denial of bodily or psychological needs or desires; practices, generally rigorous, intended to purify the mind, and to subjugate or gain mastery over physical desires and needs, in order to attain a spiritual goal; from the Greek *askēsis* (practice, bodily exercise, especially athletic training), from *askeō* (to exercise, to train).

Since all human beings, regardless of religion or culture, have the same basic needs and desires, and the same fundamental psychology, asceticism has emerged in practically all religious traditions. The common human factor disposing a person to asceticism seems to be one of temperament: even among the spiritually minded, some are more inclined to austerity than others.

Practices vary to some extent from religion to religion, but their essential nature is the same. Fasting and the reduction in the quantity and variety of food eaten is universal. Ascetics generally regarded the fasting associated with religious festivals, such as the Christian Lent and the Muslim *Ramaḍān* as insufficient, and adopted their own regimes. In Sufism and Christianity, ascetic diets were often vegetarian, though vegetarianism was not necessarily adopted solely for ascetic reasons.

Many ascetics relinquished ownership of worldly goods, taking vows of poverty, often extreme, many relying entirely on alms for their sustenance. Some have avoided the accumulation of alms by giving any excess to the poor or only accepting whatever was required for immediate need. In the West, the accumulation of wealth was one of the factors that led to the corruption of the Christian monastic system.

Celibacy, too, has been universally adopted by ascetics, sexual desire being recognized as one of the most powerful forces binding the spirit to the body. Celibacy has sometimes been expected of priests, as in the Aztec religion and Roman Catholicism. Some of the earliest Christian communities of Mesopotamia accepted only celibates as full members. From monasticism’s earliest years, marriages have been renounced and even dissolved in response to the monastic calling.

Many ascetics kept a vigil at night, limiting their sleep to the minimum, with the intention of passing their time in prayer and meditation. Some adopted extreme measures to make sleep difficult. Bare ground, a bed of rough stones, and hard pillows were the norm. In Syria, some of the early Christian ascetics tied ropes around their bodies, supporting themselves at uncomfortable angles. Some had themselves tied to a post, others (stylites) lived on a platform on top of a high pillar.

Ascetic discipline commonly included solitude or seclusion. In the early centuries, many lived in the desert – in caves dug into cliff faces, and in other inaccessible places. Even those living in Christian monastic communities would sometimes withdraw to their cells for days or weeks at a time. Food was passed through a hole in the door, through which they could also communicate with their spiritual director if necessary.

Many subjected themselves to physical extremes, and prayed for affliction to be visited upon them. Exposure to heat and cold, prickly hair shirts that never gave a moment's rest, binding with iron chains or girdles, abstention from washing, and other inventive forms of self-punishment have all been adopted by Christian ascetics. In Italy and Germany, castration and public self-flagellation enjoyed a period of mass popularity in medieval times, forms of self-torture still practised today in parts of Mexico and the southwestern states of the USA.

Many of the leading figures in Christianity have been ascetically inclined, including Antony the Great (c.251–356), father of Christian monasticism; the seventh-century Syrian, Isaac of Nineveh; Jerome (c.347–420), translator of the Bible into Latin (the *Vulgate*); Gregory Palamas (1296–1359), defender of the hesychasm of the monastery of Mount Athos; Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556), founder of the Jesuits; and numerous others. The Italian ascetic, missionary, poetic genius, Franciscan monk, and ultimately mystic and lover of God, Jacopone da Todi (b.c.1230), was a brilliant and wealthy lawyer, an energetic, enthusiastic and undoubtedly intelligent man who enjoyed worldly life to the full until his dramatic conversion around the age of forty. In reaction to his earlier life of luxury, ease and self-indulgence, not content with a morbid taste for extreme mortification, Jacopone prayed God to afflict him with “toothache and asthma, epilepsy and consumption, and many other more intimate and unpleasant maladies: that he might become blind, deaf, and dumb, that men might turn from him in disgust, that his death might be lonely and bitter, and the stomach of a wolf might be his tomb”.¹ Mercifully, his petitions remained unanswered, though for his excesses, Pope Boniface VIII incarcerated him in the dungeons of Palestrina for five years. As Jacopone was increasingly overtaken by mystical states of joy and ecstasy, his extremism, though not his love of the ascetic life, seems to have moderated.

When it comes to self-imposed torment, Hindu yogis have been no less inventive than Christian ascetics. Some have stared at the sun until they went

blind, or have gone about naked in all weather; others have reclined on a bed of spikes, or stood for long periods with arms raised until they withered. Jain *Digambaras* ('sky-clad') have likewise gone naked through the world. Other traditions have generally been less extreme. While some of the Sufis adopted severe ascetic practices from their Christian counterparts, Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism have generally condoned only moderate asceticism.

Judaism, too, although embracing certain types of asceticism such as the biblically mandated nazirite vows of abstinence,² tended to adopt only those ascetic practices associated with the principal religion of the countries where they were living. These included the severe penances of the medieval *Hasidei Ashkenaz* (Pietists of Germany), which were probably influenced by their Christian counterparts, and the ascetic practices of the sixteenth-century Safed kabbalists, who were probably influenced by the Sufi milieu in which they lived. Other than this, Judaism has never developed a tradition of radical asceticism. Fasting is limited to certain holy days such as the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*) and other memorial fasts; in fact, the Sabbath and most holidays are celebrated with an emphasis on thankfulness and joy.

In Christianity, attitudes towards asceticism have varied. Although more commonly associated with the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, it is not unknown in Protestant fraternities. The rules of some monastic orders leave any form of bodily asceticism to individual choice; others prescribe considerable austerity, though within bounds. Obedience to one's confessor, spiritual director, or superior is also considered by many to be an important aspect of ascetic practice.

Among individuals, ascetic measures have sometimes been adopted as a form of self-imposed penance, sometimes in revulsion from a former way of life. Others have maintained that ascetic practices and mortifications of the body should only be undertaken upon instruction from a spiritual director. For many, ascetic practices have been adopted as the means to develop human virtues and to further spiritual progress, though to some they have become an all-consuming end in themselves. Thus, though asceticism is not in itself regarded as mystical, many have seen asceticism as a necessary step on the spiritual path.

Much depends, of course, on what is regarded as ascetic. Some see any struggle with the bodily nature or detachment from the world, as ascetic. For others, even the effort to avoid sin – in thought or deed – is deemed ascetic. Ultimately, as many have observed, asceticism by itself is essentially negative – a negation or refusal, focusing the attention on what holds the spirit down. The love of God, on the other hand, is entirely positive, raising the spirit towards the Divine. The aspirant who is graced with divine love automatically acquires the moral virtues and mastery of the body.

The Greek Orthodox fathers whose writings are collected together in the *Philokalia* have much to say on asceticism. The prevailing theme is that bodily

asceticism is an outward discipline, a preliminary to interior contemplation. Here, the Greek word *nous* is encountered. A difficult word to translate, it refers to the spiritual aspect of human nature. Sometimes it is better translated as 'mind' or 'higher mind', sometimes as 'soul' or even 'spirit'. Speaking of asceticism, Neilos the Ascetic (*d.c.* 430), abbot of a monastery near Ankara, quotes the New Testament letter *I Timothy*. The letter indicates, incidentally, the early presence of asceticism in Christianity:

Once we have learnt to train our body, let us also train our mind (*nous*) in true devotion. For "bodily asceticism has only a limited use", in this respect resembling elementary education; whereas "true devotion is useful in all things",³ and brings well-being to the souls of those who seek to defeat their enemies, the passions.

Neilos the Ascetic, Ascetic Discourse, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.248

The eleventh- or twelfth-century monk, Ilias the Presbyter, compares ascetic practice and contemplation. At best, he says, the one is a stepping stone to the other:

The man engaged in ascetic practice can readily submit his mind (*nous*) to prayer, while the contemplative can readily submit prayer to the mind (*nous*). The first restricts his perception of visible forms, while the second directs his soul's attention towards the inner essences concealed in such forms. . . .

The man engaged in ascetic practice drinks the draught of remorse during prayer, but the contemplative gets drunk with the best cup. . . . The man engaged in ascetic practice cannot persist in spiritual contemplation for long. He is like a person who is being given hospitality but must shortly leave his host's house. . . . You must be governed by both ascetic practice and contemplation. Otherwise you will be like a ship voyaging without the right sails: either it risks being overturned by the violence of the winds because its sails are too large, or it fails to take advantage of the breeze because they are too small. . . . Ascetic practice combined with contemplation is like the body united to its ruling spirit. Without contemplation, it is like flesh dominated by a spirit of self-will.

Ilias the Presbyter, Gnostic Anthology 3:9, 41–42, 44, 53, Philokalia; cf. PCT3 pp.48, 53–54

It is clear that the intention is to pass beyond abnegation of the body into mystical contemplation:

When a man passes from the life of ascetic practice to the stage of spiritual knowledge, he is absent from the flesh.⁴ Caught up as on

clouds . . . into the translucent air of mystical contemplation, he is able to “be with the Lord forever”.⁵

Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 2:59, Philokalia, PCT2 p.151

Then the practitioner enjoys spiritual visions:

When the stage of ascetic practice has been fulfilled, spiritual visions flood the mind (*nous*) like the sun’s rays coming over the horizon.

Ilias the Presbyter, Gnostic Anthology 4:92, Philokalia; cf. PCT3 p.59

In fact, Nikētas Stēthatos (c.1020) says that contact with the divine Word (*Logos*) lifts the soul entirely beyond the body, where all ascetic practice becomes unnecessary:

We must advance from ascetic practice to the contemplation of the essences of created beings, and thence to the mystical knowledge of the divine *Logos*. There we may relinquish all external forms of bodily discipline, since we will have risen above the body’s lowly state.

Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Inner Nature of Things 85, Philokalia, PCT4 pp.131–32

See also: **ascetic** (7.1), **austerities, fasting** (8.4), **mortification, fasting (in Judaism)** (8.4), **tapas** (8.4), **teshuvah** (►4).

1. Evelyn Underhill, *JTPM* p.74.
2. *Numbers* 6:1–8.
3. *1 Timothy* 4:8.
4. *Cf. 2 Corinthians* 5:8.
5. *1 Thessalonians* 4:17.

ascetic life, ascetic practice See **asceticism**.

ashṭāṅga(ya) yoga (S/H) *Lit.* *yoga* of eight (*asṭ*) parts (*anga*); the system of *yoga* based upon a summarized description of *yoga* given by Patañjali in the second century BCE in his *Yoga Sūtras*; later known as *rāja yoga*. *Yoga* is one of the six schools of Hindu philosophy, and Patañjali’s contribution to posterity was to summarize the practical essentials of *yoga* in his *Yoga Sūtras*. In common with the nature of *sūtras*, his writing is a cryptic summary of the essentials of the subject, in this case, covering just four short sections. It is probable that the *sūtras* formed the basis of his spiritual teachings. Each *sūtra* introduces a subject which he would have then explained to his disciples at greater length.

Although *ashṭāṅga yoga* is attributed to Patañjali, he himself speaks only of *yoga*, which he describes as consisting of eight fundamental principles. These range from such things as personal cleanliness (*shaucha*) to *samādhi* (absorption in meditation). A perusal of these eight characteristics reveals that they are more or less common to all forms of *yoga* – indeed to all spiritual paths that seek experience of the higher Reality. In his first *sūtra*, Patañjali says simply:

Herewith – an exposition of *yoga*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:1

And he follows it up with a brief definition of *yoga* which has echoed timelessly down the centuries, “*yogash chitta-vṛitti nirodhaḥ*”:

Yoga is cessation (*nirodha*) of the waves of the mind (*chitta-vṛitti*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:2

In this context, *nirodha* means restraint, confinement and control, leading to cessation or stilling of the mind. Once this stillness has been attained, the essential consciousness or awareness – which is the primary witness, self, or seer of all experience – realizes its own natural state of being:

Consciousness (*drashṭā*) then exists in its own natural state.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:3

Otherwise, this natural state of consciousness identifies with the waves or fluctuations of the mind:

Otherwise, it (the *drashṭā*) identifies with the fluctuations (*vṛitti*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:4

Part of Patañjali’s style is to list things of importance in different categories. He begins by listing the five kinds of *chitta-vṛitti*, the five kinds of thought. They are painful or otherwise, depending upon how they appear to the ego:

The *vṛittis* are fivefold:

they are either painful (*klishṭa*) or pleasurable (*aklishṭa*).

They are right understanding (*pramāṇa*),

deluded understanding (*viparyaya*),

imagination (*vikalpa*), sleep (*nidrā*), and memory (*smṛiti*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:5–6

Patañjali also speaks of God as the supreme Being:

God is the supreme Being, untouched by affliction,
 action and reaction, and impressions.
 In Him is the highest omniscience.
 He is without limit, the Teacher even of the ancients.

His manifest Word is *Praṇava*.
 By constant repetition of it and meditation on its essence,
 the attention turns within, and all obstacles are overcome.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:24–29

Praṇava is another term for *Aum*, the creative Word or Music described in the *Upanishads*. Like many Indian mystics, ancient and modern, Patañjali is recommending that the soul invokes this creative power as the means of overcoming all difficulties. He states this at the beginning of his *Sūtras*. He then goes on to describe nine causes of mental distraction:

Disease, indolence, doubt, heedlessness,
 lethargy, worldliness, erroneous perception,
 lack of concentration, instability –
 These are the causes of mental distraction (*chitta vikshepa*).
 They are obstacles.

The natural companions of these distractions (*vikshepa*) are:
 mental discomfort, anxiety, restlessness of the body,
 irregular inspiration and expiration.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:30–31

To counteract them, he recommends the cultivation of various positive virtues, the control of the breath, the awakening of the inner senses, especially that of inner vision, and fixing the attention upon someone (*i.e.* a *guru*) who has himself overcome all these obstacles:

The mind becomes purified
 by cultivating feelings of friendliness, compassion and joy,
 as well as neutrality and indifference
 towards pleasure or pain, virtue or vice,
 and also by the expiration and retention of breath.
 Also, the awakening of the spiritual senses
 is helpful in establishing steadiness of mind;
 Also, through the experience
 of serene or luminous inner states;
 Also, fixing the mind on one who has removed
 all such obstacles (from his mind).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:33–37

Patañjali continues by describing the progress of the practitioner towards increasingly higher stages of *samādhi*, until:

His mastery extends from the tiniest atom to the Infinite.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:40

And at an even higher stage:

There, he becomes one
with truth (*ṛita*) and wisdom (*prajñā*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:48

With this climax, Patañjali ends his first section. The second section is concerned with the external aspects of yogic practice:

Self-discipline (*tapas*), self-study (*svādhyāya*)
and surrender to God (*Īshvara prāṇidhāna*)
constitute the (external) practice (*kriyā*) of *yoga*.
They are for the purpose of removing afflictions (*klesha*),
and attaining *samādhi*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:1–2

He continues by describing the primary afflictions:

Spiritual ignorance (*avidyā*), egotism (*asmitā*),
worldly attachment (*rāga*), aversion (*dvesha*)
and clinging to life (*abhinivesha*) are the main afflictions (*klesha*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:3

Spiritual ignorance, he says, is the root of the other afflictions, and he goes on to define each of them in greater detail. They are overcome, he continues, by meditation:

Their activities are to be overcome by meditation (*dhyāna*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:11

The source of all suffering, he then points out, lies in the storehouse of latent, unexpressed *karma*. As long as *karma* remains in seed form, it will continue to come to the forefront, causing the various afflictions described. The pain and pleasure experienced are directly related to the degree of vice and virtue that come to the fore. But this suffering can be avoided. Since it arises from mistaking the unreal for the Real, and identifying the real self with the false self, the way to avoid it, he says, is to become aware of the Real:

On the removal of this false identification,
 the self obtains complete transcendence (*kaivalya*, i.e. liberation)...
 Upon destruction of impurity,
 by practising the various aspects of *yoga*,
 spiritual illumination arises,
 which develops into an awareness of Reality.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:25, 28

Patañjali then describes the eight aspects or steps of *yoga* from which the name *ashṭāṅga yoga* has originated, and which are the most well-known feature of his *Sūtras* in the popular mind:

Yama, niyama, āsana, prāṇāyāma, pratyāhāra,
dhāraṇā, dhyāna, and samādhi are the eight limbs of *yoga*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:29

Definitions of the first five of these, which are external practices, then occupy the remainder of the second section, while the latter three (internal, meditational practices) constitute the first part of the third section. The remainder of the third section consists of a description of the power attained by a concentrated mind in deep meditation (*saṁyama*) that has mastered the arts of *dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna* and *samādhi*.

These eight parts (*angas*) are not, of course, unique to Patañjali, but have been a part of Indian spiritual philosophy and *yoga* both before and since his time:

1. *Yama*. Restraints, controls, rules of self-discipline, don'ts, bad habits to be avoided.
2. *Niyama*. Observances, do's, good habits to be adopted, moral preparation for meditation.
3. *Āsana*. Posture, the correct posture in which to sit for meditation.
4. *Prāṇāyāma*. Fine control of the breathing, leading to control of the subtle *prāṇa* (life energy) and awakening of the *chakras* (centres of bodily *prāṇa*).
5. *Pratyāhāra*. Detaching the mind from the senses and turning it inward.
6. *Dhāraṇā*. Concentration.
7. *Dhyāna*. Contemplation.

8. *Samādhi*. Inner absorption in superconsciousness; the state of ecstasy in which the world of the material senses is forgotten.

Of these, the first five, which are external practices, provide the basis for the last three, which are internal. Of the *yamas* and *niyamas*, five of each are listed by Patañjali, although some later yogic texts list ten.¹ The word *yama* means ‘to stop, control, or subdue’. They are prohibitory practices that can be usefully followed by everyone and are found in all systems and religions. They are:

1. *Ahiṃsā*. Non-violence to any living being, by thought, word, or deed.
2. *Satya*. Truthfulness, never to tell a lie.
3. *Asteya*. Non-stealing, not to steal or take anyone’s property.
4. *Brahmacharya*. Chastity, continence; not to regard the opposite sex with lust.
5. *Aparigraha*. Non-covetousness, absence of greed, not to hunger after unnecessary things.

Patañjali explains briefly:

These (*yamas*) are not limited by social class, country,
time or circumstance.
They are great and universal vows....

When disturbed by improper thoughts,
the remedy is cultivation of their opposites.
Improper thoughts, whether they are done,
caused to be done or approved of (in others) –
Whether they be of greed, anger or delusion,
in mild, moderate or intensive degree,
result in endless suffering and ignorance;
Therefore, the opposites should be cultivated.

On being firmly established in non-violence (*ahiṃsā*),
then, in (your) presence, hostility is given up.
On being firmly established in truthfulness (*satya*),
all action bears (good) fruit.
On being firmly established in honesty (*asteya*),
(true) prosperity (*lit.* all jewels) is attained.

On being firmly established in chastity (*brahmacharya*),
vitality and vigour are attained.

On being firmly established in non-possessiveness (*aparigraha*),
knowledge of the ‘how’ and ‘why’ of existence is attained.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:31, 33–39

He then lists the five *niyamas*, the five practices to be followed:

1. *Shaucha*. Cleanliness – of the body, the place of dwelling, clothing, food, and thought.
2. *Samtoshā*. Contentment; to be happy and satisfied with one’s lot.
3. *Tapas*. Self-discipline.
4. *Svādhyāya*. Study, which implies both self-examination and study of the scriptures.
5. *Īshvara prāṇidhāna*. Surrender to God; complete merging of the individual will into the will of God; working as the agent of the Lord, without any concern about the results of one’s actions.

Patañjali presents the topics briefly. Here, *sattva*, a term with no precise English equivalent, has a meaning encompassing harmony, the utter truthfulness of Reality, and the purity of being:

From bodily cleanliness (*shaucha*),

arises protection from infection from contact with others.

From firm establishment in the purity of *sattva*

arises cheerfulness, one-pointedness, control of the senses,
and fitness for the direct perception of the soul (*ātmadarshana*).

From contentment (*samtoshā*) arises great happiness.

From self-discipline (*tapas*) arises perfection of the body and the senses.

From self-study (*svādhyāya*), a direct perception of divine matters.

From surrender to God (*Īshvara prāṇidhāna*), perfection in *samādhi*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:40–45

Having briefly considered both the *yamas* and *niyamas*, he then continues with the remaining six aspects of *yoga*. Firstly, he says a few words on posture:

Posture (*āsana*) should be steady,
stable and comfortable.

By this means, tensions are relaxed,
 and meditation on the Infinite becomes possible.
 As a result, there are no assaults
 from the pairs of opposites.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:46–48

Then on control of the breathing:

Having accomplished this, there follows *prāṇāyāma*,
 this being the cessation of inspiration and expiration.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:49

There then follows some ambiguous detail concerning the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, which Patañjali would no doubt have clarified when teaching his students, followed by the conclusion:

From this (*prāṇāyāma*),
 the coverings over the light are destroyed,
 and the mind becomes fit for concentration (*dhāraṇā*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:52–53

Patañjali then describes *pratyāhāra* (withdrawal, mental detachment from the senses) in a somewhat technical fashion, concluding:

From this arises complete control (*vashya*) over the senses (*indriya*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:55

This concludes the second section of the *Yoga Sūtras*. The third section begins with a concise definition of the mental processes involved in meditation. Patañjali identifies three states of mind – fixation or concentration (*dhāraṇā*), visualization or contemplation (*dhyāna*) and superconscious absorption (*samādhi*) – all three of which must be aligned before the state of deep meditation, which he calls *saṁyama* (balanced self-control), is attained:

Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) is confining the mind
 to one particular thing.

Contemplation (*dhyāna*) is the unbroken flow of the mind
 towards that particular thing.

The same (practice),
 with consciousness shining in its own light,
 unaware of its own self, is absorption (*samādhi*).

The three, working together,
 constitute deep meditation (*saṁyama*).

As a result of mastering it (*saṁyama*),
 arises the light of higher consciousness.
 Its purpose is to discover
 higher and higher stages (of consciousness).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:1–6

Patañjali then goes on to identify the different miraculous powers (*siddhis*) and transcendental perceptions that come to a person who applies the power of *saṁyama* in various ways. But in the end, he cautions:

They are obstacles to *samādhi*;
 But properly used, supernatural power
 can be used to combat instinctive natural forces.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:38

And at the very end of this section, he concludes:

The highest wisdom (*jñāna*) is born of direct perception,
 and simultaneously includes (awareness of)
 all aspects of all things.
 Utter transcendence (*kaivalya*, i.e. liberation) is attained
 when the self has equal purity with the Truth (*Sattva*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:55–56

The last section of the *Yoga Sūtras*, unlike the majority of the first three sections, is somewhat obscure, and some scholars have wondered whether it was a later addition, not written by Patañjali at all. It begins with an observation concerning miraculous powers (*siddhis*), and moves on from there into more obscure aspects of the natural transformations of mind and energy in creation.

Conspicuous by its absence from Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras* is any mention of the specific techniques of meditation he taught and practised, or even of the particular postures (*āsanas*) to be adopted. Since all *yoga* and meditation should be practised under the guidance of an adept, the absence of these details is understandable. Patañjali would no doubt have taught them directly to his disciples. In fact, it is characteristic of all esoteric traditions, especially of the past, that essential details of 'how to do it' are missing. These have always been conveyed by word of mouth from master to disciple.

See also: **haṭha yoga, prāṇāyāma, rāja yoga.**

1. E.g. *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 1:1–2; *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:16, *HYPM* p.56.

assāsa-passāsa (Pa) *Lit.* in-breathing (*passāsa*) and out-breathing (*assāsa*); inhalation and exhalation. See **ānāpānasati**.

asubha bhāvanā, asubha-saññā (Pa), **ashubha bhāvanā, ashubha-saṃjñā** (S), **mi sdug pa bsgom pa** (T), **bùjìng guān** (C), **fujōkan** (J) *Lit.* meditation (*bhāvanā, bsgom pa, guān, kan*) on the impure or un-attractive (*a-shubha, mi sdug pa, bùjìng, fujō*); awareness of or reflection on (*saṃjñā, saññā*) the repulsive (*ashubha, asubha*); meditation on or awareness of what is unpleasant, not beautiful, unlovely, disagreeable, loathsome, hideous, disgusting, foul, impure, *etc.*; in Buddhism, meditation on one or more of a collection of foul or repulsive meditation subjects (Pa. *asubha kammaṭṭhāna*), the intention being to counter lust and attachment to the body, to develop mindfulness (Pa. *sati*) of the body, and to lead towards the development of *jhāna* (contemplative absorption); often treated as a noun, hence meditation on or awareness of repulsiveness, loathsomeness, foulness, unpleasantness, *etc.* The subjects of repulsiveness meditation are either the thirty-two bodily parts and organs or the successive stages in the decay of a corpse left in a charnel ground.

The chosen subject for meditation on repulsiveness is known as an *asubha nimitta* (image of repulsiveness, repulsive object), which is visualized within during the meditation practice. Different meditation objects and themes are given to students by meditation teachers, depending upon the temperament of the individual. *Asubha bhāvanā* or *asubha-saññā*, sometimes called *asubha dhamma* (repulsiveness practice), is recommended for those of a lustful nature¹ or of vanity concerning their bodily appearance.²

In the *Girimānanda Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, the Buddha lists *asubha-saññā* as one of ten meditation subjects intended to detach a person from the body, the senses, and the illusory world. These are awareness of or reflection on: impermanence (*anicca*); absence of a permanent self or soul (*anattā*); repulsiveness (*asubha*); danger (*ādīnava*); abandoning or giving up (*pahāna*); dispassion or detachment (*virāga*); cessation (*nirodha*); disinterest in the whole world (*sabbaloke anabhirata*); impermanence (*anicca*) of all relative phenomena; and mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*).³ With regard to meditation on repulsiveness, he recommends meditation on the thirty-one parts of the body as a means of creating detachment from the body:

And what is meditation on repulsiveness (*asubha-saññā*)? In this, a *bhikkhu* reviews this body from the soles of the feet upward and from the crown of the head downward, enclosed by skin and full of all manner of impurities: “There is in this body: head hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart,

liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, large intestines, small intestines, stomach, excrement, bile, phlegm, lymph, blood, sweat, fat, tears, oil, saliva, mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.” Thus he dwells, contemplating unattractiveness (*asubha*) with regard to this body. This is called meditation on repulsiveness (*asubha-saññā*).

Anguttara Nikāya 10:60, *Girimānanda Sutta*, PTSA5 p.109; cf. NDBB p.1412, ANTB

Only thirty-one body parts are mentioned in the *suttas*. The thirty-second organ, the brain, is identified in the *Dvattiṃsākāra* of the *Khuddaka Nikāya* and later literature.⁴

The *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya* has the same text in the fuller context of mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*), which includes mindfulness of breathing, walking, standing, lying down, eating, drinking, and so on. Nine charnel-ground mindfulnesses are also recommended:⁵

As though he were to see a corpse (*sarīra*) thrown aside in a charnel ground (*sīvathikā*), one, two or three days dead, bloated livid, and oozing matter; ... being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals or various kinds of worms, ... a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews; ... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews; ... a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews; ... disconnected bones scattered in all directions – here a hand bone, there a foot bone; here a shinbone, there a thigh bone; here a hip bone, there a back bone; here a rib bone, there a breast bone; here an arm bone, there a shoulder bone; here a neck bone, there a jaw bone; here a tooth, there the skull; ... bones bleached white, the colour of shells; ... bones heaped up; ... bones more than a year old, rotted and crumbling to dust – a *bhikkhu* compares this same body with it thus: “This body too is of the same nature; it will be like that; it is not exempt from that fate.” As he abides thus – vigilant, ardent, and resolute – his memories and intentions connected with the household life are abandoned. That too is how a *bhikkhu* develops mindfulness of the body (*kāyagatāsati*).

Majjhima Nikāya 119, *Kāyagatāsati Sutta*, PTSM3 pp.91–92; cf. MDBB p.952

According to ancient Indian custom, dead bodies that were not cremated, perhaps because the relatives could not afford the price of wood, were left unburied in a cemetery or charnel ground, where wild animals would consume them and where they would be subject to the natural processes of decay and disintegration. Traditionally, a practitioner would go to a graveyard, often at night and, finding a suitable corpse or part thereof, would practise meditation.

In the *Abhidhamma* texts, forty different objects and themes for meditation are described, which are classified into six categories. Among these are

ten subjects for meditation on the repulsiveness (*asubha kammaṭṭhāna*) of a corpse, based on the Pali *suttas*, and also known as charnel-ground contemplations (*sīvathikā-manasikāra*). Drawn from the *Abhidhamma*, the ten subjects recommended by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga* arise from contemplation of one or more of ten successive stages in the decomposition of a dead body: bloated (*uddhumātaka*); blackish and discoloured (*vinīlaka*); festering (*vipubbaka*); breaking apart due to decay (*vicchiddaka*); gnawed by animals (*vikkhāyitaka*); scattered in pieces (*vikkhittaka*); hacked and scattered (*hatavikkhittaka*); blood-stained (*lohītaka*); worm-infested (*pulavaka*); and dispersed bones (*aṭṭhika*).⁶ The Sanskrit *Abhidharma* and the *Mahāyāna* texts following them list nine meditations on awareness of the repulsive (*ashubha-saṃjñā*), though there are differences in order and content between them and the Pali sources.

The Chinese Buddhist tradition has further elaborated on the same theme. Meditation on the nine bodily orifices is recommended together with suitably graphic images depicting oozing lymph, blood, and other body fluids, *etc.* Seven kinds of bodily repulsiveness (*bùjìng*) are also given as subjects for meditation, *viz.* repulsiveness in their seeds (*zhǒngzǐ bùjìng*), *i.e.* human bodies being formed from semen and the mother's blood (according to ancient belief); repulsiveness in their conception (*shòushēng bùjìng*), *i.e.* through sexual intercourse; repulsiveness in their residence (*zhùchù bùjìng*), *i.e.* gestation in their mother's womb; repulsiveness in their food and eating (*shídàn bùjìng*), *i.e.* living and feeding on the mother's blood; repulsiveness in process of birth (*chùshēng bùjìng*), *i.e.* being born amidst the discharge of the placenta and placental water; repulsiveness in their entirety (*jǔtǐ bùjìng*), *i.e.* the inherent impurity, comprised of internal organs, excrement, and other repulsive things beneath a flimsy skin; repulsiveness in their outcome (*jiūjìng bùjìng*), *i.e.* being destined for death, putrefaction, decomposition, and complete disintegration.⁷

Buddhist meditation, especially in the *Theravāda* tradition, commonly involves the formation of an internal, mental image (*nimitta*) of the subject of meditation. Visualization of this *nimitta* progresses from a preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*), which is the initial perception and mental image of the subject itself, through an acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), which is a more stable internal image or clear mental representation, and finally a *paṭibhāga nimitta* (counterpart image), which is self-luminous and leads the practitioner into the first *jhāna*. Meditation on body parts or a decaying corpse is conducted in the same manner. In his description of meditation on these *nimittas*, Buddhaghosa describes meditation on a bloated corpse and the *nimittas* visualized:

In his night quarters and in his day quarters, he should keep his mind anchored there thus (repeating mentally), “Repulsiveness of the

bloated, repulsiveness of the bloated (*asubha uddhumātaka*).” And he should turn his attention to the *nimitta*, bring it to mind and strike at it with initial thought (*vitakka*) and sustained thought (*vicāra*), over and over again. As he does so, the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) will arise. This is the difference between the two images: the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*) appears as a hideous, dreadful, and frightening sight; but the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) appears like a man with big limbs, lying down after eating his fill. Simultaneously with his acquiring the counterpart image, his lust is abandoned by suppression owing to his giving no attention externally to sense desires.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 6:65–67, PTSV pp.189–93; cf. PPVM p.178

Buddhaghosa continues with an account of meditation on the other stages of decomposition, which follow the same pattern. He says that this kind of meditation will take a meditator only as far as entry into the first *jhāna*.⁸

See also: **āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā, jhāna, nimitta**.

1. *E.g. Anguttara Nikāya 6:107 (Rāga Sutta), 9:1 (Sambodhi Pakkhiya Sutta), 9:3 (Meghiya Sutta), PTSA3 pp.445–46, PTSA4 pp.353, 358.*
2. *E.g. Majjhima Nikāya 62, Mahārāhulovāda Sutta, PTSM2 p.424.*
3. *Anguttara Nikāya 10:60, Girimānanda Sutta, PTSA5 p.109.*
4. *Khuddaka Nikāya, Khuddakapāṭha 3, Dvattiṃsākāra, PTSKP p.2.*
5. See also *e.g. Majjhima Nikāya 10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta), 13 (Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta), PTSM1 pp.58–59, 88–89.*
6. *Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 6:1–10, PTSV pp.178–79.*
7. See “*aśubhabhāvanā*,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism, PDB*.
8. *Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 6:67–81, PTSV p.189; cf. PPVM pp.178–82.*

atiyoga (S), **shin tu rnal ’byor** (T) *Lit.* supreme (*ati*) union (*yoga*); the highest of the three *tantras* or *yogas* and the ninth of the nine-vehicle (*yāna*) classification of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan *Vajrayāna* or tantric Buddhism, the three *tantras* being *mahāyoga* (great *yoga*), *anuyoga* (further *yoga*), and *atiyoga*. See **navayāna**.

atta-kilamatha (Pa) *Lit.* self (*atta*) + exhaustion (*kilamatha*); self-mortification; extreme asceticism; practised as an antidote to worldly and sensual desire; in Buddhism, to be avoided, along with the other extreme of self-indulgence and addiction to sensual pleasures.

The Buddha came from a royal family, living a life of luxury, refinement, and pleasure. In the *Sukhamāla Sutta*, he describes something of his upbringing:

Bhikkhus, I lived in refinement, utmost refinement, total refinement. My father even had lotus ponds made in our palace just for my enjoyment: in one of them blue lotuses bloomed, in another red lotuses, and in a third white lotuses. I used no sandalwood that was not from Kāshī (Vārāṇasī). My turban was from Kāshī, as were my tunic, my lower garments, and my outer cloak. A white canopy was held over me day and night to protect me from cold, heat, dust, grass, and dew.

I had three palaces: one for the winter, one for the summer, one for the rainy season. I passed the four months of the rains in the rainy-season palace, being entertained by musicians, with not a single man among them, and I did not leave the palace. While the slaves, workers and servants in other people's homes were given broken rice together with sour gruel for their meals, in my father's home they were given choice hill rice, meat, and boiled rice.

Anguttara Nikāya 3:39, Sukhamāla Sutta, PTSA1 p.145; cf. ANTB, NDBB pp.239–40

Asceticism, often extreme, was an established aspect of the religious and spiritual milieu of his time. Jain mendicants practised complete nudity, while ascetics of the Vedic tradition practised various forms of *tapas* (austerities). So when, early in his adult life, the Buddha renounced the life of luxury, and set out on the quest for spiritual enlightenment, it was only natural that he would try what appeared to be the established means of seeking it. These included breath control exercises (*prāṇāyāma*) and certain *bandhas* (locks) of *haṭha yoga*, although he does not use these terms. The exercises, he says, caused him considerable pain, and they did not result in enlightenment:

But although tireless energy was aroused in me and unremitting mindfulness (*sati*) was established, my body was overwrought and uncalm because I was exhausted by the painful striving.

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.242–43, MDBB p.337

He also tried extreme fasting, taking only a tiny amount, of which he famously said:

I thought: “Suppose I take very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup.” So I took very little food, a handful each time, whether of bean soup or lentil soup or vetch soup or pea soup. When I did so, my body reached a state of extreme emaciation. Because of eating so little, my limbs became like the jointed segments of withered creepers or bamboo stems, . . . my backside became like a camel's hoof, . . . the projections on my spine stood out like corded beads, . . . my ribs jutted out as gaunt as the crazy rafters of an old roofless barn, . . . the gleam of my eyes

sank far down in their sockets, looking like the gleam of water that has sunk far down in a deep well, . . . my scalp shrivelled and withered as a green bitter gourd shrivels and withers in the wind and sun, . . . and my belly skin adhered to my backbone. Thus if I touched my belly skin I encountered my backbone and if I touched my backbone I encountered my belly skin.

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta PTSM1 pp.245–46; cf. MDBB p.339

But, as with the exercises of *haṭha yoga*, fasting brought no great spiritual improvement, and he was obliged to seek an alternative:

But by this racking practice of austerities I have not attained any superhuman states, any distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones (*ariya*). Could there be another path to enlightenment?

Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.246, MDBB p.340

The Buddha then goes on to describe how he relinquished these methods and, rising up through the *jhānas* (levels of meditative absorption), he finally attained enlightenment.¹ In a discourse commonly portrayed as the first that he delivered, he advises:

Bhikkhus, there are these two extremes that ought not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth from the householder's life. What are these two? There is devotion to indulgence in sensual pleasure regarding the objects of sensual desire, which is base, coarse, common, ignoble, and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification (*attakilamatha*), which is painful, ignoble, and unprofitable.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*. And what is that Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*)? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*.

Saṃyutta Nikāya 56:11, Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, PTSS5 pp.420–21

See also: **dhutanga, tapas** (8.4).

1. *Majjhima Nikāya 36, Mahāsaccaka Sutta, PTSM1 pp.246–49; cf. MDBB pp.340–42.*

Aum̐, Om̐kār(a) (S/H), **Onkār** (Pu) The sacred sound or syllable *Aum̐* (*Om̐*) + the suffix *kāra*, which conveys the meaning of making/maker, doing/doer, author of/creator of, etc.

Om̐kāra is synonymous with *Aum̐*, used in the *Upanishads* and by various yogic paths to represent the absolute *Brahman*. Specifically, these two terms refer to the creative Sound or power that emanates from *Brahman*. *Aum̐* is thus regarded as the most sacred word of the *Vedas*, and both *Aum̐* and *Om̐kāra* are commonly used as *mantras*, either on their own or in conjunction with other words or syllables.

Onkār is also a name given by some Indian *sants* to the ruler of the second spiritual realm (*trikuṭī*), which they have equated with *Brahman*.¹

Below the *sun̐* or *daswān dwār* is the region of *trikuṭī* (i.e. universal mind), also called *gagan*. This is the region of *Praṇav*, *Brahm*, or *Onkār*.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sār Bachan Prose 1:14, SBAT p.11*

Trikuṭī is the source of knowledge,
where thunder resounds like a big drum,
and the light of the red sun glows brightly.
There you will find the four-petalled lotus
from which the ceaseless sound of *Onkār* arises.

Kabīr, Shabdāvalī 1, Bhed Bānī, Shabd 22:15, KSS1 p.66

In the *Upanishads* and elsewhere, *Aum̐* or *Om̐kāra* is known as *Praṇava* (that which resounds), from *praṇu* (to roar). In an ambiguity that may be intentional, there are many places where it is uncertain whether the writer is speaking of *Aum̐* as a spoken syllable or as the creative power itself.

It is more or less an article of faith among Hindus that the syllable *Aum̐* is full of conscious energy, possessing extraordinary powers, and that the chanting of *Aum̐* helps both the chanter and listener become attuned to God. It is believed that *Aum̐* is a divine revelation, and that without *Aum̐* no sacred chant has power. Vedic hymns, especially those used in ritual, generally begin and end with *Aum̐* as an auspicious salutation expressing acknowledgment of the Divine. Indeed, many undertakings are begun and ended with repetition of *Aum̐*. Likewise, many *mantras* begin and end with *Aum̐*. From the very beginning, Vedic students are therefore taught to pronounce and intone *Aum̐* correctly.

The *Upanishads* speak of the importance and potency of *Aum̐*. According to the *Kātha Upanishad*, *Yama*, the lord of death, tells the adamant and persistent seeker Nachiketas:

I will tell you briefly that word (*pada*) which all the *Vedas* declare,
of which all spiritual disciplines (*tapas*) speak –

Desiring which, men lead a life of self-control (*brahmacharya*).
 It is *Aum̐*. This word (*akshara*) indeed is *Brahman*,
 this word (*akshara*) is the highest.
 Whoever knows this word (*akshara*) realizes all his desires.

Kaṭha Upanishad 1:2.15–16

The passage has a number of untranslatable undertones. The true *Aum̐* is clearly the mystic power, which is one with *Brahman*, not the spoken word. Even so, the spoken *Aum̐* is still highly venerated. *Aum̐* is not only a written and spoken word or syllable, it is also the mystic symbol, insignia or expression of *Brahman*, in the sense that the creative power is the expression or indication of the Supreme. Moreover, *akshara* has several other meanings including both ‘syllable’ and ‘imperishable’. “This (*Aum̐*) indeed is the imperishable *Brahman*,” is therefore an acceptable alternative translation.

Other *Upanishads* have made similar statements. “*Oṃkāra* is indeed the Self (*Ātman*),” concludes the *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad*.² The *Taittirīya Upanishad* says, “*Aum̐* is *Brahman*; everything is *Aum̐*.”³ The *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* advises, “Meditate on *Ātman* (the Self) as *Aum̐*.”⁴ Likewise, the *Dhyānabindu Upanishad*:

Those who desire release from bondage should meditate constantly
 upon the monosyllable *Aum̐*, which is *Brahman*.

Dhyānabindu Upanishad 9; cf. YU p.153

According to the *Bhagavad Gītā*:

He who closes all the doors of the body –
 confining the mind to its centre (*hṛid*, heart),
 drawing all the vital energy of the soul (*ātman*) into the head –
 He establishes himself in yogic concentration (*yoga dhāraṇā*).
 Repeating the single syllable (*eka akshara*) *Aum̐*, denoting *Brahman*,
 remembering Me, and abandoning the body,
 he leaves (the body), and reaches the highest state.

Bhagavad Gītā 8:12–13

The *Maitrī Upanishad* discusses *Aum̐* as the inner mystic Sound (*Shabda*) of *Brahman*. Higher than the Sound, however, is that utterly formless, soundless *Brahman*:

Verily, there are two *Brahmans* to be meditated upon –
Shabda and *Ashabda*.
 Only through *Shabda* is the *Ashabda* revealed.
 Here (in *Brahman* and below), the *Shabda* is *Aum̐*.

Moving upward with its help,
the ascent can be made into the *Ashabda*.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:22

This chapter closes with the invocation, “Hail *Aum̐*! Hail *Brahman*!” Swami Vivekananda speaks of this divine creative power as the *Sphoṭa*. Literally, *sphoṭa* means a bursting forth, an expansion. In this context, it refers to the eternal Sound or Word that bursts forth from the Divine as the means by which all creation is manifested. He also asserts the unique character of the syllable *Aum̐*:

All this expressed, sensible universe is the form, behind which stands the eternal inexpressible *Sphoṭa*, the manifest as *Logos* or Word. This eternal *Sphoṭa*, the essential eternal material of all ideas or names, is the power through which the Lord creates the universe; nay, the Lord first becomes conditioned as the *Sphoṭa*, and then evolves Himself out as the yet more concrete, sensible universe.

This *Sphoṭa* has one word as its only possible symbol, and this is the *Aum̐*. And as by no possible means of analysis can we separate the word from the idea, this *Aum̐* and the eternal *Sphoṭa* are inseparable; and therefore, it is out of this holiest of all holy words, the mother of all names and forms, the eternal *Aum̐*, that the whole universe may be supposed to have been created.

But it may be said that, although thought and word are inseparable, since there may be various word-symbols for the same thought, *Aum̐* may not necessarily be the only word that represents the thought out of which the universe has become manifested. To this objection we reply, that this *Aum̐* is the only possible symbol which covers the whole ground, and there is none other like it.

Swami Vivekananda, Bhakti Yoga; cf. CWSV3 p.57

The prolonged intonation or chanting of *Aum̐* is thus deeply associated with the creative Sound through which the universe came into existence.

Aum̐ is the combination of three letters A, U, and M. In Sanskrit, the vowels A and U coalesce and give the sound of O. O is thus a diphthong, when *Aum̐* is written as *Om̐*. The letters A, U, and M together are pronounced *Aum̐*, with the M being strongly nasalized or hummed, which is indicated in Sanskrit by a dot. Various symbolic meanings and interpretations have been given to each of the three letters and to the syllable as a whole, for instance:

1. Vocalization starts with the throat and ends with the lips. ‘A’ is a guttural sound, emanating from the throat. When ‘U’ is pronounced the sound rolls through the mouth from the root of the tongue to the lips. ‘M’ is the

last sound produced, when the lips are closed. *Aum̐* is hence symbolic of all the words that can be vocalized.⁵

2. 'A' signifies creation (*Brahmā*), 'U' preservation (*Vishṇu*), and 'M' destruction or dissolution (*Shiva*). Since, in Hinduism, God is understood as the creator, the preserver and the destroyer, *Aum̐* can be understood as a name of God.⁶
3. The three letters forming *Aum̐* symbolize the three worlds (*triloka*): heaven (*svarga*), the world of mortals (*martya*, *i.e.* the physical universe), and the netherworld (*pātāla*). According to another interpretation it symbolizes the material, the subtle, and the causal worlds.⁷
4. *Aum̐* signifies the supreme Reality (*Brahman*).⁸ It is a symbol for what was, what is, and what shall be. It represents also what lies beyond past, present, and future:

The word (*akshara*) *Aum̐* is all this (that exists). This is the explanation of it: all that is in the past, the present and the future, everything is *Om̐kāra*. And whatever else there is beyond the threefold division of time, that too is *Om̐kāra*.

Māṇḍūkya Upanishad 1:1

5. *Aum̐* signifies the four states of human consciousness. 'A' represents the waking state (*jāgrat*, *vaishvānara*), 'U' the dream state (*svapna*, *taijasa*), and 'M' the nothingness of the deep sleep state (*sushupti*, *prājñā*). *Aum̐* itself with the resounding, nasalized 'M' signifies the transcendent state (*turīya*), which is pure consciousness.⁹ When reciting *Aum̐*, the meditator should focus his concentration on the supreme Self.

The symbolism of *Aum̐* as the four states of consciousness is further expounded from the symbol used to represent *Aum̐*, which consists of three curves, a semicircle, and a dot. The three curves are connected, and the dot with the semicircle stands by itself. The three curves symbolize the first three states of consciousness. The waking state is symbolized by the large lower curve, the dream state by the lateral curve, and deep sleep by the upper curve. The openness of the semicircle under the dot indicates that finite thinking cannot grasp the magnitude of the dot, while the dot itself represents absolute consciousness (*turīya*). Without *turīya*, there would be no thinking and no universe. It is illuminated by its own light, and illumines and governs the other three states. But this is only experienced by those who have gone beyond the three curves, *i.e.* three states, and attained the dot (*i.e.* *turīya*) and merged with it. The dot is also interpreted as the witnessing

consciousness that dwells within the body or as liberation from the world of appearance.¹⁰

Swami Shivananda, who was a practising doctor before becoming a spiritual adept, provides a possible reason for the mysterious power of *Aum*. He suggests that the vibrations produced in the head by the continuous chanting of *Aum* stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands through a massage-like action in the nasal cavity. Since these organs play an important role in human psychology and physiology, this may explain something of the mystery intrinsic in the intoning of *Aum*.¹¹

See also: **Om̐kāra** (2.1, 3.1, 4.2).

1. See also Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, *Sār Bachan Poetry* 26:2.1–2, *SBP* p.226.
2. *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* 12.
3. *Taittirīya Upanishad* 1:8.1.
4. *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 2:2.6.
5. Swami Bhaskarananda, *Essentials of Hinduism*, *EHB* p.148; Swami Vivekananda, *Bhakti Yoga*, *CWSV3* p.58.
6. Swami Adiswarananda, *Meditation and Its Practices*, *MPA* p.111; Swami Bhaskarananda, *Essentials of Hinduism*, *EHB* p.147; B.K.S. Iyengar, *Light on Prāṇāyāma*, *LPYB* p.107.
7. Swami Adiswarananda, *Meditation and Its Practices*, *MPA* p.111; Swami Bhaskarananda, *Essentials of Hinduism*, *EHB* p.147.
8. *Kaṭha Upanishad* 1:2.16; *Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad* 33:1; *Taittirīya Upanishad* 1:8.1.
9. *Māṇḍūkya Upanishad* 9–12.
10. See “Om,” *Encyclopedia of Eastern Philosophy and Religion*, *EEPR* pp.254–55.
11. Carrie Schneider, *American Yoga*, *AYAY* p.201.

austerities Ascetic practices or acts; mortifications of the body; practices, generally rigorous, intended to purify the mind, and subjugate or gain mastery over physical desires and needs, in order to attain a spiritual goal; prevalent to some extent in all religious traditions, but finding their most extreme expression in Christianity, Hinduism, and Jainism.

Many in Christianity, including St Jerome, Bernard of Clairvaux, Ignatius of Loyola and Jacopone da Todi, practised extreme austerities and mortifications of the body in the early years after their conversion, moving towards a more moderate stance as they developed. Henry Suso, who practised the most severe forms of self-torture, including sleeping in a tight-fitting hair shirt with a hundred and fifty sharp brass nails driven through it, and wearing an iron chain until “blood flowed from him like a river”,¹ admits, writing of himself:

The servant carried on the strict life of mortification of the outer man, ... from his eighteenth to his fortieth year and, as a result, his health was undermined. There was nothing in store for him but death, unless he desisted from such exercises. So he gave it up, and God showed him that this severity and all these austerities had been just a good beginning and a breaking down of the outer man. He intended the servant to press further on by another path, if he ever wanted to reach his goal.

Henry Suso, Life of the Servant 1:19, LSS p.55

And in accordance with the divine command, he threw his instruments of self-torture into the river. Elsewhere, he writes that despite his austerities, he had yet to surrender himself to God in his inner self:

There was a man in Christ who, in his young days, had exercised the outward man in all the ways that beginners are wont to practise, but the inward man remained untrained in the highest abandonment (of self to God). Then he felt indeed that something must be lacking in him, but he knew not what it was. And when he had thus lived for a long time, and for many years, he once fell into a contemplation, and was driven back upon himself, and a voice spoke within him thus: "You should know that it is inner abandonment that leads men to the highest Truth."

Henry Suso, Book of Truth, Prologue; cf. BEW p.173

He adds too, that although powerfully attracted, the change in direction was not immediately welcome, and "for a time he resisted the inner call within him".

Illustrating the spectrum of human nature within religious traditions as elsewhere, there were many who counselled moderation. François de Sales gives this advice, adding that a person should never make a show of their austerities:

To cure ourselves of sinful habits, it is certainly useful to mortify the flesh, but much more necessary to purify and cleanse our heart. In any case, we should never undertake corporal austerities without our confessor's advice....

In company we should always be cheerful; St Romuald and St Antony are highly praised because, in spite of all their austerities, they were always joyful, gay and courteous in all they said and did.

François de Sales, Devout Life 3:23–24, IDL pp.154–55

See also: **asceticism, fasting (8.4), mortification.**

1. Henry Suso, *Life of the Servant* 1:15, LSS p.46.

bairāgan (Pu) A T-shaped arm-rest used while sitting cross-legged in meditation. The stem of the T stands on the ground about 18 inches high, and the two elbows are rested on the cross piece, which is 2 to 4 inches wide, making it possible to place the thumbs in the ears to block external noises. It is usually constructed in two separate parts, so that the stem screws into the arm rest, thus making it easier to carry when travelling.

bām bhāg, bām mārg (H/Pu) See **vāmāchāra**.

bandh(a) (H) *Lit.* closed, locked; knotted, contracted; internal ‘knots, ‘locks’ or contractions of internal muscles such as the diaphragm, practised in *haṭha yoga*. *Bandhas* are a particular kind of *mudrā*, used especially in *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

bàoyuán (C) *Lit.* embrace (*bào*) the Origin (*yuán*); embrace the Source; typically found in the phrase *bàoyuán shǒuyī* (embrace the Origin and guard the One). Here, *yuán* and *yī* (the One) both refer to the *Dào*. *Bào* implies embracing and merging with the *Dào*, while *shǒu* emphasizes vigilantly guarding one’s awareness of the *Dào*. See **shǒuyī**.

basti-karma (H/Pu) See **vasti-karma**.

bāṭin (A/P) *Lit.* internal, interior, inward; hence, esoteric; also as *al-bāṭin* (the internal, the interior, the inward), referring to the inner truth behind external forms, esotericism or mysticism as opposed to exotericism or religion. *Al-Bāṭin* is also one of the ninety-nine names of *Allāh* (the Inward, the Unmanifest).¹

Bāṭin is the esoteric aspect of religion or spirituality, generally referred to as the *ṭarīqah*, the Sufi path of inner mystic realization and spiritual practice. It is commonly contrasted with the *ẓāhir* (external) aspects of religion, *i.e.* the *sharīʿah*, the path of religious law and external observances. *Bāṭin* is found in such terms as *ʿilm al-bāṭin* (internal knowledge), meaning mystical experience; *ʿulamāʾ al-bāṭin* (knowers of the internal), *i.e.* Sufis, as opposed to those who are only ‘knowers’ (*i.e.* scholars) of the *sharīʿah*; *ahl al-bāṭin* (people of the internal, internalists, esotericists), another epithet of the Sufis; and *ʿabd al-bāṭin* (servant of the inward), a mystic devotee of the divine Beloved. *Bāṭin* is sometimes equated with *pinhān* (hidden), as in the synonymous terms *sayr-i bāṭin* (inner journey) and *sayr-i pinhān* (hidden journey).

Sufis maintain that there is a level of inner spiritual meaning (*bāṭin*) to the *Qur'ān*, as well as the more obvious level of outer meaning. In addition to the Sufis, among those who have held this doctrine were the eleventh-century *Ismā'īlīyah*, also known as the *Bāṭinīyah* or *Bāṭinīyān*, a group regarded as heretical by traditional Islam, although at one time they possessed significant political and military power. The *Bāṭinīyah* maintained that since God is fair to everybody, He must therefore provide a living, authoritative teacher to teach this inner meaning and to guide His devotees aright.

Among the Sufis, Ibn al-'Arabī points out that there is an inner and an outer aspect to everything in existence:

God placed within each thing – and the mind (*nafs*) of man is one of the things – an outer dimension (*ẓāhir*) and an inner dimension (*bāṭin*). Through the outer dimension (*ẓāhir*), man perceives things which are called 'entities', and through the inner dimension (*bāṭin*), he perceives things which are called 'knowledge' (*'ilm*). God is the Outer (*al-Zāhir*) and the Inner (*al-Bāṭin*), so through Him perception takes place. For it is not in the power of anything other than God to perceive something through itself; it can only perceive through that which God places within it.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 1:166.4, FMIA1 (1:19) p.253; cf. SPK p.218

God, he says, has arranged things in this manner so that man may find God in the solitude of his own inner being, and can then see the Divine in all things:

Every seeker of his Lord must be alone with himself, with his Lord in his inmost consciousness, since God gave man an outward dimension (*ẓāhir*) and an inward dimension (*bāṭin*) only so that he might be alone with God in his inward dimension (*bāṭin*) and witness Him in his outward dimension (*ẓāhir*) within the secondary causes, after having gazed upon Him in his inward dimension (*bāṭin*), so that he may discern Him within the midst of the secondary causes. Otherwise, he will never recognize Him. He who enters the spiritual retreat (*khalwah*) with God does so only for this reason, since man's inward dimension (*bāṭin*) is the cell of his retreat.

Ibn al-'Arabī, Meccan Revelations 3:265.1, FMIA5 (3:358) p.391, SPK pp.158–59

Al-Jīlānī observes that a person's inward state is automatically reflected outwardly:

Each earthenware pot exudes its own contents. Your deeds are clues to the firmness of your belief (*i'tiqād*). Your outer (*ẓāhir*) is a clue to your inner (*bāṭin*). This is why a certain wise man said: "The outer is the

expression of the inner (*al-ẓāhir* ‘*unwān al-bāṭin*’).” Your inner (*bāṭin*) is outwardly apparent to the Lord of Truth (Almighty and Glorious is He) and to His elect (*khawāṣṣ*) among His servants. If one of these should ever come your way, you must behave decently in his presence.

Al-Jilānī, al-Faṭḥ al-Rabbānī 10, FRQJ p.51; cf. SRCD p.66

Rūmī is characteristically straightforward in his explanations:

Man’s bodily senses are infirm,
but within him dwells a mighty nature. . . .
His outward nature (*ẓāhir*) is agitated by a gnat:
his inward nature (*bāṭin*) encompasses the seven heavens.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:3759, 3767; cf. MJR4 pp.478–79, in SPL p.63

The unbeliever’s argument is just this:
“I see no home but this external (*ẓāhir*).”
He never reflects that everything external (*ẓāhir*)
is herald to a hidden wisdom.
Indeed, the profit of everything external (*ẓāhir*)
is internal (*bāṭin*);
It is hidden, like the benefit of medicines.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:2878–80; cf. MJR4 pp.430–31, in SPL pp.21–22

This outward (*bīrūn*) spring and garden
are the reflection of the inward (*bāṭin*) garden:
The whole of this world is a single nugget,
and the inward (*bāṭin*) is the mine.
Hence the lover sees whatever I say in verse
as the true coin of his spiritual state,
but the man of intellect sees only an idle tale.

Rūmī, Dīvān-i Shams-i Tabrīz 1940:20482–83, KSD4 p.193, in SPL p.282

See also: **ẓāhir** (8.4).

1. *Qur’ān* 57:3.

bhajan(a) (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* worship, adoration, devotion; loving service, prayer; constant dwelling on the Lord; meditation, either in a general sense or more specifically as inner listening to or for the divine Word or *Shabd*; the singing of devotional songs; hence also, songs of devotion to God, such as the *bhajans* of the Rajasthani mystic, Mīrābāī, which are so well known and well loved in India; from the same root (*bhaj*, to worship, to adore, to serve, to be devoted

to) as *bhakti* (devotion, worship, adoration), *Bhagavat* ('Adorable One'), and *bhāgavata* (holy, divine). See **bhajana** (►4).

bhāvanā (S/Pa/Pk), **sgom pa** (T), **xiūxí** (C), **shujū** (J) *Lit.* bringing into existence (*bhava*), becoming; development, cultivation, especially of the mind, hence mental development, refinement, or cultivation; self-development by any means, especially concentration, meditation, and control of the mind; reflection, contemplation, meditation; spiritual yearnings, thoughts, aspirations, reflections; development or cultivation of virtues and mental attitudes; observances, practices. *Bhāvanā* is a generic term for deep reflection on some virtue, practice or spiritual truth, and is also used in more general contexts. The reflection and, by extension, the topic of reflection and associated practices are known as *bhāvanās*.

In Jainism, twenty-five *bhāvanās* are enumerated as practices to support the five *mahāvratas* (great vows) taken by mendicants, five *bhāvanās* for each vow. In the Jain *Digambara* tradition, sixteen virtues and practices described in medieval texts concerning *shrāvakāchāra* (conduct for laypeople) are called *bhāvanās*. In the *Shvetāmbara* tradition, *bhāvanā* is a term for the twelve themes for meditation known to *Digambaras* as the *anuprekshās*, which concern the difficulties of life in this world.¹

The twenty-five meditations or observances that support the five *mahāvratas*, together with a list of corresponding transgressions (*atichāras*), are mentioned in Āchārya Umāswāmī's *Tattvārtha Sūtra*.² Unless the practitioner makes an effort, simply vowing to behave in a certain way is likely to fail. The *bhāvanās* are intended to strengthen the mind, making it possible to follow the five vows in the manner intended. There are some variations between Jain texts. According to Āchārya Umāswāmī, with variations from Āchārya Kundakunda,³ the twenty-five *bhāvanās* – five associated with each of five the *mahāvratas* – are:

1. *Ahiṃsā* (non-violence, non-harming). Vigilance when walking (*īryā*); vigilance over the mind – keeping the mind (*manas*) under control; vigilance when procuring things; vigilance when picking things up and putting them down; vigilant inspection of food and drink items. Āchārya Kundakunda includes vigilance of speech, and combines procuring and handling things as one *bhāvanā*. Vigilance in all of these actions will help prevent causing harm to other living creatures.
2. *Satya* (truthfulness). Speaking without deliberation; not speaking in anger, or out of greed, fear or jest, since each of these can lead to untruthfulness. Āchārya Kundakunda has “perverted thoughts” in place of speaking without deliberation.

3. *Asteya* (non stealing, taking only what is offered). Accepting alms or shelter only after due consideration, of which the five *bhāvanās* are: asking permission before taking shelter in someone's property; occasional repetition of such a request in case (for example) the owner should himself require its use; fixing a particular time limit with the owner for shelter offered; asking permission to use a particular shelter if it is already in use by a fellow mendicant; only eating food acquired by begging after showing it to one's preceptor. Āchārya Kundakunda has this last one as, "Living in a lonely and deserted house open to others, eating pure food, and refraining from quarrels with co-religionists."
4. *Brahmacharya* (celibacy, continence). Avoiding the use of bedding used by a woman, an impotent person, or an animal; avoiding lustful talk about women; avoiding looking at the form of a woman; avoiding recall of previous encounters with women; avoiding delicious food.
5. *Aparigraha* (non-possession, non-attachment). Remaining unmoved by pleasant or unpleasant touch, taste, smell, form, or sound.

Practices similar to some of the above are to be found among the *samitis*, *guptis*, and other categories of Jain behaviour and practice.

The sixteen *Digambara bhāvanās* for laypeople are also listed in the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*,⁴ where they are said to bring about the influx of *Tīrthankara-nāma* (body of a *Tīrthankara*) *karma*, which in a future life will be conducive to the formation of a *Tīrthankara*'s body. Further elaboration is provided by Pūjyapāda in his commentary on the verse.⁵ The sixteen *bhāvanās* are:

1. *Darshana-vishuddhi*. Purity of belief; further subdivided into eight categories, viz. freedom from doubt (*niḥśhankita*); freedom from worldly desire (*niḥkāmshita*); freedom from reflex disgust or repulsion (*nirvichikitsā*); freedom from superstitious belief (*amūḍha-dṛishṭi*); safeguarding (*upagūhana*) the Jain doctrine from criticism by discretion when dealing with the faults of fellow Jains; encouraging steadfastness (*sthiti-karaṇa*) in oneself and others on the spiritual path; tender affection (*vātsalya*) for fellow travellers on the path; promotion (*prabhāvanā*) of the Jain doctrine.
2. *Vinaya-sampannatā*. Perfection in following the code of behaviour.
3. *Shīlavrateshu anatichāra*. Impeccable observance (*anatichāra*, without transgression) of the vows (*vratas*) and virtues (*shīlas*); implies conquest of human passions.

4. *Abhīkṣhṇa-jñānopa-yoga*. Ceaseless (*abhīkṣhṇa*) cultivation (*yoga*) of right knowledge and understanding (*jñāna*).
5. *Samvega*. Desire for liberation from transmigration and its attendant suffering.
6. *Shaktitas-tyāga*. Giving (*tyāga*) according to one's capacity (*shakti*); giving to others the gifts of knowledge, food, medicine, and so on.
7. *Shaktitas-tapas*. The practice of austerities (*tapas*) according to one's capacity (*shakti*).
8. *Sādhu samādhi*. Supporting (*samādhi*) monks (*sādhus*) in their practise of austerities and spiritual practice.
9. *Vaiyāvṛittyā-karaṇa*. Practising (*karaṇa*) assistance (*vaiyāvṛittyā*); serving the deserving, especially mendicants.
- 10–13. Devotion (*bhakti*) to *arhats* (noble ones, the enlightened, the *Jinas*), *gurus* or *āchāryas* (teachers, heads of orders), *upādhyāyas* or scriptural scholars (*bahu-shrutas*), and to the Jain doctrine (*pravachana*) itself.
14. *Āvashyaka-parihāṇi*. Diligence (*parihāṇi*, no negligence) in performance of the six daily duties (*āvashyakas*).
15. *Mārga prabhāvanā*. Promotion (*prabhāvanā*) of the Jain path (*mārga*) to liberation; glorification of the Jain path by austerities (*tapas*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and worship (*pūjā*).
16. *Pravachana-vatsalatva*. Tender affection (*vātsalya*) for fellow adherents of the Jain doctrine (*pravachana*).

Four *bhāvanās*, sometimes called the 'compassionate *bhāvanās*', are also mentioned in addition to the twelve *bhāvanās* or *anuprekshās*. The *Tattvārtha Sūtra* describes them as qualities (*guṇas*) or sentiments.⁶ These *bhāvanās* are:

1. *Maitrī bhāvanā*. Reflection on friendship (*maitrī*); meditation on universal goodwill, benevolence and amity towards all living beings, regarding all as equal. *Maitrī bhāvanā* helps to foster a sense of kinship with all living beings, leading to tolerance, forgiveness, and a caring and supportive attitude towards all. It engenders honesty and the use of kind rather than hurtful words and deeds. The *maitrī bhāvanā* may take the form of repeated

personal affirmations such as, “My soul and the soul of all living beings are of the same essence. I am a friend to all living beings. I will support and care for all living beings.” Likewise with the other three *bhāvanās* and the twelve *bhāvanās* or *anuprekshās*.

2. *Pramoda bhāvanā*. Reflection on joy (*pramoda*) at the well-being and happiness of others; admiration and appreciation of the success and good qualities of others. This helps to reduce the negative influence of jealousy, bringing peace to the heart.
3. *Karuṇā bhāvanā*. Reflection on compassion (*karuṇā*); generating compassionate understanding and sympathy for the suffering of others, whether arising from their own imperfections or from the events of life; developing a kind, tolerant and forgiving understanding that the root of suffering lies within each person.
4. *Madhyastha bhāvanā*. Reflection on impartiality (*madhyastha*); meditation on equanimity under all circumstances, whether events work out favourably or otherwise; learning not to be disappointed or to react negatively when things do not turn out as desired; developing the understanding that one should do one’s best under all circumstances, but then remain detached from the outcome.

The practice of these four *bhāvanās* leads to a kind, appreciative, compassionate, helpful, detached and peaceful state of mind in which new *karmas* are not created. The repetition of such formulae, when practised sincerely and with concentration, can have a profound purifying effect upon a person’s mind and emotions, helping to eliminate negative and worldly thinking. When frequently reiterated, such personal affirmations can help to provide a powerful impetus towards diligent efforts on the spiritual path.

Buddhist Bhāvanā

In Buddhism, *bhāvanā* consists of those acts that help develop and control the mind through concentration and meditation. Many things can be taken as the focus of *bhāvanā*. These include the fostering or cultivation of wholesome acts, thoughts and attitudes such as lovingkindness, generosity, compassion, appreciation, wisdom, and insight, *etc.* – even the study of doctrine, chanting, and memorization of *suttas*, *etc.* It is the cultivation or refinement of those things which enhance spiritual life. In the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha speaks in a general sense of the true monk as one who is “fond of *bhāvanā* and rejoices in *bhāvanā*” – who enjoys his spiritual practice and the leading of a spiritual life.⁷

As a term, *bhāvanā* is often compounded to denote the development of a particular faculty or to identify a particular form of meditation. Such

compounds include: *kāya bhāvanā* (development of body, implying either ascetic practices or mental-emotional development); *citta bhāvanā* (development of mind or consciousness); *paññā bhāvanā* (development of wisdom);⁸ *mettā bhāvanā* (development of lovingkindness); *asubha bhāvanā* (reflection on repulsiveness); *brahmavihāra bhāvanā* (cultivation of the sublime ‘dwellings’ or states of mind of lovingkindness, compassion, happiness at the welfare of others, and equanimity); *samādhi bhāvanā* (development of concentration);⁹ *samatha bhāvanā* (development of tranquillity); and *vipassanā bhāvanā* (development of insight). It is also a generic term used for cultivation of or meditation upon any of the forty classical meditation objects and subjects (*kammaṭṭhānas*) mentioned in the Pali *suttas* and listed and elaborated upon in the analytical *Abhidhamma* and allied literature. In practice, continuous and focused application of the attention to any meditation subject or object is known as *bhāvanā*. Hence, various forms of meditation, such as *samatha bhāvanā* and *vipassanā bhāvanā*, are commonly referred to as *bhāvanā*.

Some of these terms appear in the Pali *suttas*, others in the later commentarial and analytical texts. *Bhāvanā* is the third of three traditional means of acquiring merit (*puñña-kiriya-vatthu*), the other two being *dāna* (generosity, charity) and *sīla* (morality), mentioned in the Pali *suttas*.¹⁰ In the analytical *Abhidhamma*, the *puñña-kiriya-vatthu* are expanded to ten, of which *dāna*, *sīla* and *bhāvanā* are the first three.¹¹

As *bhāvanā-mārga*, *bhāvanā* is the fourth of the five paths (S. *pañca-mārga*) described in *Mahāyāna* texts. It is the path of ‘bringing into being’ the insights of the fourth path, *darshana-mārga* (the path of vision). *Darshana-mārga* involves a deepening of understanding leading to direct perception or insight into the true nature of things, *i.e.* emptiness (*śūnyatā*). *Bhāvanā-mārga* stabilizes this understanding, non-intellectual cognition deepens, and the insight or awareness becomes a living experience.

In the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha consistently emphasizes the importance of persistent application to the spiritual path if progress is sincerely desired. He also points out that the effect of *bhāvanā* may not be immediately noticeable but, with the passage of time and with persistent cultivation of the various aids to enlightenment (*sambodhi-pakkhiya*), the effects accumulate and become apparent. He then continues by giving some simple examples of the process:

Bhikkhus, when a *bhikkhu* is intent on development (*bhāvanā*), even though he may not form the wish: “May my mind be liberated from the impurities (*āsava*) by non-clinging,” yet his mind is liberated from the impurities by non-clinging. Why? Because of his development (*bhāvanā*). Development (*bhāvanā*) of what? Of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*),¹² the four right strivings (*sammappadhāna*), the four bases of spiritual power (*iddhipāda*), the five spiritual faculties (*pañca-indriya*), the five powers (*pañca-bala*),

the seven factors of enlightenment (*bojjhanga*), and the noble eightfold path (*ariyāṭṭhangika-magga*).

Suppose there was a hen with eight, ten or twelve eggs that she had properly covered, incubated, and nurtured. Even though she might not form the wish: “May my chicks pierce their shells with the points of their claws or beaks and hatch safely!” – yet the chicks are capable of doing so. For what reason? Because the hen had properly covered incubated, and nurtured her eggs. . . .

When, *bhikkhus*, a carpenter or a carpenter’s apprentice sees the impressions of his fingers and his thumb on the handle of his adze, he is not aware: “I have worn away so much of the adze handle today, so much yesterday, so much earlier;” but when it has worn away, he knows that it has worn away. So too, when a *bhikkhu* is intent on development (*bhāvanā*), even though he is not aware: “I have worn away so much of the impurities (*āsava*) today, so much yesterday, so much earlier” – yet when they have been worn away, he is aware that they have been worn away.

Suppose, *bhikkhus*, there was a seafaring ship bound together by lashings that had been worn away in the water for six months. It would be hauled up on dry land during the cold season, and its lashings would be further attacked by wind and sun. Inundated by rain from a rain cloud, the lashings would readily deteriorate and rot away. So too, when a *bhikkhu* is intent on development (*bhāvanā*), his fetters (*saṃyojana*) readily collapse and rot away.

Anguttara Nikāya 7:71, *Bhāvanānuyutta Sutta*, PTS4 pp.126–27; cf. NDBB p.1089

In the *Sambodhi Pakkhiya Sutta*, the Buddha lists five things that are conducive to practising the development (*bhāvanā*) of these aids to enlightenment (*sambodhi-pakkhiya*). They are: association with spiritual friends (*kalyāṇa-mitta*); living virtuously by the monastic code (*pātimokkha*); frequently hearing about the *Dhamma*; making a sincere effort to give up unwholesome qualities (*akusalā-dhammā*); and possessing penetrating wisdom (*paññā*) concerning the impermanence of things.¹³ These are five supports to the practice of *bhāvanā*.

In the *Sangīti Sutta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, the Buddha distinguishes three forms of *paññā* (knowledge or wisdom). There is knowledge arising from thinking (*cintāmayapaññā*), knowledge arising from learning (*sutamaya-paññā*), and knowledge arising from meditation (*bhāvanāmayapaññā*). The first is intellectual wisdom or analytical understanding, and refers to things one has figured out for oneself; the second indicates things heard (*suta*) or learnt from others; and the third, *bhāvanāmayapaññā*, implies direct mystical knowledge or wisdom, which arises from seeing things from a level of consciousness that is higher than that of normal waking consciousness. This includes realizations concerning one’s own inner make-up, an expanded

awareness of how the mind works, and deep insight into the functioning of the world of impermanence, suffering, and illusory selfhood.¹⁴

See also: **anuprekshā**, **brahmavihāra**, **pañcha-mārga** (►4), **vipassanā**.

1. See **anuprekshā**.
2. Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:3–8.
3. Āchārya Kundakunda, *Aṣṭapāhuḍa* 3:32–36, *APAK*.
4. Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 6:24.
5. Pūjyapāda, *Sarvārthasiddhi*, on *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 6:24.
6. Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 7:6.
7. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.225; cf. *TBLD* p.489.
8. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.219.
9. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.222.
10. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* p.218; *Anguttara Nikāya* 8:36, *Puññakiriyavatthu Sutta*, *PTSA4* pp.241–43.
11. *E.g. Buddhaghosa*, *Sumangala Vilāsinī* (*Dīgha Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā*) 3:999ff.
12. See also *Dīgha Nikāya* 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *PTSD2* pp.303–4; *Majjhima Nikāya* 10, *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.62.
13. *Anguttara Nikāya* 9:1, *Sambodhi Pakkhiya Sutta*, *PTSA4* pp.351–52.
14. *E.g. Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, *PTSD3* pp.218–19.

bhrāmaṇī dhāraṇā (S/H) *Lit.* concentration (*dhāraṇā*) on the *bhrāmaṇī* (whirlwind); concentration on the airy *chakra*; also called *vāyavī* (air) *dhāraṇā*;¹ one of five forms of *dhāraṇā* (concentration) practised in *haṭha yoga* to gain control over the five *chakras* below the eye centre and their associated *tattvas* of earth, water, fire, air, and *ākāsha*. In *bhrāmaṇī dhāraṇā*, concentration is held at the heart *chakra*, the centre associated with the air *tattva*. Why *bhrāmaṇī* (from *bhramaṇa*, circulating) is used in this context is uncertain, although ‘whirlwind’ has an obvious association with air. See **haṭha yoga**.

1. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 3:69, 77.

bhujangī (S/H), **bhuangam** (Pu) *Lit.* she-serpent; the *kuṇḍalinī*, the energy of *prāṇa* in the human body, commonly known as the serpent power; from *bhujanga* (snake, serpent). The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* mentions a number of terms that all refer to this same power:

Kuṭilāṅgī (crooked-bodied), *kuṇḍalinī*, *bhujangī*, *śakti* (energy, power), *īshvarī*, *kuṇḍalī*, *arundhatī* are all synonymous terms.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:104, *HYPM* p.417

Guru Arjun uses the term when pointing out that the practice of *kuṇḍalinī* and other forms of *yoga* will not completely overcome the five basic human imperfections of lust, anger, greed, attachment, and egotism:

They read scriptures,
and contemplate the *Vedas*;
They practise the inner cleansing techniques of *yoga*
and control of the *bhuṅgam*.
But they cannot escape from the company of the five passions.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 641, AGK

Bhujanga is also used as a metaphor for *māyā*, the power of illusion and deception, and appears elsewhere in Indian mythology and cosmogony.

See also: **kuṇḍalinī** (5.1), **kuṇḍalinī yoga**.

bìguān (C), **hekikan** (J) *Lit.* wall (*bì*) gazing (*guān*), wall contemplation; a form of meditation attributed to the (probably) South Indian monk Bodhidharma, the founder of *Chán* Buddhism in China during the fifth or sixth centuries (CE), which became *Zen* Buddhism in Japan; hence, Bodhidharma's popular Japanese epithet of Hekikan-Baramon ('Wall-Contemplating *Brāhmaṇ*').

According to legend, Bodhidharma spent nine years meditating in front of a cliff near his hermitage or (in some accounts) a cave on Mount Sōng. Traditional pictures of the sage depict him seated in meditation, facing a wall or a cliff. Some semblance of the practice continues to the present day: when novitiates first request entry to some *Zen* monasteries, they are required to demonstrate their aptitude by spending up to three days in isolation, practising *zazen* (seated meditation) while facing a wall. In *Sōtō Zen* monasteries, monks and nuns sit in two rows facing the walls of the *zendō* (meditation hall), their backs to the central aisle.

Bodhidharma is generally credited with having coined the expression *bìguān*. The term first appears in a text attributed to him in which he says:

When a man, abandoning the false and embracing the True, in singleness of thought abides firmly in *bìguān*, he finds that there is neither self nor otherness, and that the common man and the sage are of one essence; and he abides firmly in this belief and never moves away from it. Then he will no longer be a slave to words, for he is in silent communication with the Principle itself, free from conceptual analysis, for he is serene and not-acting.

Bodhidharma, Two Entrances and Four Acts; cf. in MZBS pp.73–74

However, the nature of the practice has remained unclear, and the term has been variously interpreted by *Zen* and *Chán* commentators. No descriptions of such a technique have been found elsewhere, and there is a prevalent opinion that *bìguān* should be understood metaphorically. It has been suggested that it implies remaining as still as a wall, both internally and externally, excluding all thoughts that attempt to grasp the world. The meditation then itself becomes a wall against the intrusion of the outside world. Tibetan translations of this text, which are generally quite literal, translate *bìguān* as ‘remains still in radiance (*lham mer gnas na*)’,¹ which further adds to the belief that the expression should be understood metaphorically.

See also: **miànbì**.

1. See Jeffery L. Broughton, *Bodhidharma Anthology*, BAEZ pp.67–68.

bīja-mantra, bījākshara (S) *Lit.* seed (*bīja*) instrument (*tra*) of mind (*man*); seed syllable or letter (*akshara*); monosyllabic sounds having no particular etymologically derivable meaning, such as *Aum*, *hrīm*, *shrīm*, *krīm*, *hūm*, *aīm*, *phaṭ*, and so on; in both Hindu and Buddhist tantrism, a single-syllable *mantra*, specific to a particular tantric deity, which is regarded as embodying the primary *mantra* associated with that deity (its *mūla-mantra*, root *mantra*); also, a sound that resonates with one of the *chakras* (centres of subtle life energy) of the physical body; often abbreviated as ‘*bīja*’.

The *chakras* are centres of the body’s complex system of *nāḍīs* (channels of *prāṇa* or subtle life energy). Each of the six *chakras* is said to have a particular number of ‘petals’. The petals are formed by the interplay of the *nāḍīs*, and reflect the specific energy aspects of each *chakra*. On each petal there is a ‘letter’, each ‘letter’ being a manifestation of a more inward or subtle *śabda* (sound) or *śakti* (energy). In yogic and tantric sources, the fifty letters on the fifty petals of the six *chakras* are believed to be the origin of the fifty sounds (phonemes) of the Sanskrit alphabet.¹

From the subtle sounds or vibrations of these ‘letters’, yogis are said to have discovered various *bīja-mantras*, which are intended to resonate with the energy of each *chakra* when repeated with the attention held at that centre. This repetition is generally practised together with regulation of the in-breathing and out-breathing, according to a range of exercises known collectively as *prāṇāyāma*. In addition, each of the five lower *chakras* is associated with one of the five primal *tattvas* (‘elements’) comprising material substance (gross and subtle), with which the *bīja-mantras* or *bījāksharas* are also said to resonate. Each centre also has its own presiding god (*deva*) and goddess (*devatā*). There are no standard names for the *chakras*, *tattvas*

and deities with their associated *bīja-mantras*, which all vary to some extent among yogic and tantric texts. Modern lists likewise differ from each other, being drawn from one or more sources. A generalized list is:

Chakra		Tattva		Devatā	Bīja-mantra
<i>mūlādhāra</i>	rectal	<i>prithvī</i>	earth	<i>Ḍākinī</i>	<i>laṃ</i>
<i>svādhishṭhāna</i>	genital	<i>jala</i>	water	<i>Rākinī</i>	<i>vaṃ</i>
<i>maṇipūra</i>	navel	<i>tejas</i>	fire	<i>Lākinī</i>	<i>raṃ</i>
<i>anāhata</i>	heart	<i>vāyu</i>	air	<i>Kākinī</i>	<i>yaṃ</i>
<i>viśuddha</i>	throat	<i>ākāśa</i>	ether / space	<i>Shākinī</i>	<i>haṃ</i>
<i>ājñā</i>	eyebrows			<i>Hākinī</i>	<i>Auṃ</i>

The goal of a number of yogic and tantric schools is to raise the *kuṇḍalinī*, the energy of *prāṇa* that normally rests in a quiescent or unawakened state at the basal or *mūlādhāra chakra*. Repetition (*japa*) of the *bīja-mantra* of a particular *chakra* awakens the *prāṇa* at that centre, permitting the *kuṇḍalinī* to pass upwards unimpeded.

The more esoteric descriptions maintain that the infinite essence of the *Dharma* is contained within a *mantra*, of which the *bīja-mantra* is a quintessential condensation, a microcosmic essence of the whole. *Auṃ*, for instance, is the primal *bīja-mantra*, the seed syllable of the universe. It is regarded as being imbued with the cosmic creative power – the unwritten and unuttered *Auṃ*, from which the universe comes into being and is sustained in existence. *Auṃ* is thus regarded as the source of all other *bīja-mantras*, and many multi-syllable *mantras* begin with the syllable *Auṃ*.

Mantras and *bīja-mantras*, together with *maṇḍalas*, *mudrās* and complex meditative visualizations of *maṇḍalas*, deities and *mantras*, are a part of the means by which a tantric practitioner identifies with his *ishṭa-deva* or *ishṭa-devatā*, his personal god or goddess. In tantric Buddhism, this personal deity will be the celestial *buddha* or *bodhisattva* who has been chosen as his focus of worship, and through whom he wishes to attain enlightenment. In Hindu and Buddhist tantrism, these celestial beings have their own specific *bīja-mantras*, which are said to contain the essence of what these beings are and represent.

The *bīja-mantras* associated with various Hindu deities include:

<i>Durgā</i>	<i>duṃ</i>
<i>Gaṇesha</i>	<i>glauṃ</i>
<i>Kālī</i>	<i>krīṃ</i>
<i>Lakshmī</i>	<i>shrīṃ</i>
<i>Mahāmāyā</i>	<i>hrīṃ</i>
<i>Sarasvatī</i>	<i>aiṃ</i>
<i>Shiva</i>	<i>haum</i>

In Buddhism, the *bīja-mantras* of the five *dhyāni buddhas* (celestial *buddhas* whose images are visualized in meditation) are generally listed as:

Vairochana	<i>Auṃ</i>
Akshobhya	<i>hūṃ</i>
Ratnasambhava	<i>traṃ</i>
Amitābha	<i>hrīḥ</i>
Amoghasiddhi	<i>āḥ</i>

See also: **mantra**, **prāṇāyāma**, **tantra**.

1. Classical Sanskrit counts 48 phonemes; Vedic Sanskrit lists 49; some sources among the *tantras*, by counting diphthongs as separate letters, have arrived at totals from 50 to 54.

black wrapping A wrapping of a black cloth over the eyes to help see inside the mind in a clearer way without the distraction of daylight or electric light. Frank Fools Crow (c. 1890–1989), a greatly respected Oglala Lakota spiritual leader and healer, explains why he finds it useful when treating a patient. Sometimes he uses a black wrapping over the eyes, sometimes a blanket over his entire body. His inspiration and understanding of the patient’s condition arise from “communion with *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers”:

“To reach full communion with *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers, I must isolate myself from all distractions, including intruding thoughts, and create a quiet place where I am fully open to them and focused on the matter at hand. The black cloth enables me to do this in a very effective way. Darkness also allows my mind’s eye to take over, because it can see far beyond what my physical eyes can see. Have you noticed that images stand out very well against dark background? When the wrapping is on me, my senses are keener and come alive. Darkness helps what I feel and sharpens my hearing for spiritual sounds. Even whispers become like shouts. And if a patient is with me in the darkness, such as when we are both standing under the same blanket, we are floating around in a mood that makes us think of spiritual things and the higher powers. Then we are more open to them. These are just some of the reasons why I, and some of the other medicine people, sometimes cure or heal at night, and why the vision questers’ greatest visions usually come to them at night. Sun is good, and light is good. But during the daytime we see with our physical eyes, and it is harder to concentrate on spiritual matters. The different ways are ways *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers have given me to use for different situations.”

“And how do you learn whether wrapping up or using a blanket will be best in a given situation?”

“When the gifts were given to me I was told which would work best for certain things. The blanket is not used as often, but it is especially useful in cases of heavy bleeding.”

Fools Crow sometimes wrapped his black cloth on himself, but more often it was done by Kate. It was wide enough to cover his eyes, and part of his nose and forehead. His simplest approach was to form a small altar on the ground by marking the four corners with cloths of the directional colours. He then laid a bed of sage in the middle of the cloths and stood on the middle of the bed while the black cloth was wrapped on him. Then he prayed, asking for the help and guidance of *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers, and in a short while was shown by his stone or his mind screen what the problem was, what caused it, and what medicine to use, and how to prepare and apply it. Remember that this was only one of the ways he had for diagnosing.

Thomas Mails, *Fools Crow*, FCWM pp.124–25

blo sbyong (T) *Lit.* mind (*blo*) training (*sbyong*); mind transformation, mind purification; mind exercises, mental discipline, cultivation of the mind; phonetically rendered as *lojing*; particularly associated with, but not exclusive to, the *Kadampa* school of Tibetan Buddhism; intended to cultivate compassion and engender the attitude of mind of a *bodhisattva* that is focused on spiritual matters and enlightenment (S. *bodhichitta*, ‘awakened mind’).

The practice of *blo sbyong* is founded on the eighth chapter (concerning meditation) of Shāntideva’s (C8th) ten-chapter poem *Bodhisattva-charyāvatāra* or *Bodhicharyāvatāra* (‘Guide to a *Bodhisattva*’s Way of Life’). Shāntideva teaches the transformation of self-interested thinking into an attitude of compassion and care for others, and an approach to the difficulties of life as a stimulus to strengthen the resolve to develop *bodhichitta*. Among other wise observations, he points out that self-interest and negative thinking are not advantageous even for a person’s own happiness and welfare, let alone that of others. The eighth chapter of Shāntideva’s book concerns itself with meditation or mind training. A large number of Tibetan texts concerning *blo sbyong*, with subsequent commentaries, have been founded on this chapter, including those by the eleventh-century founders of the *Kadampa* tradition. Shāntideva’s original *Madhyamaka* teaching has been given a tantric flavour by the introduction of practices such as the visualization of deities. *Madhyamaka* and *Yogāchāra* are the two principal schools of Indian *Mahāyāna* Buddhism.

Influential among these texts is the *Blo sbyong tshig brgyad ma* (‘Eight Verses on Mind Training’) by the *Kadampa* monk Langri Thangpa (1054–1123). The first seven verses are concerned with *bodhichitta* in a relative

(*saṃvṛiti*) or mundane context, and involve altering one's perception of and approach to others; the last addresses absolute (*paramārtha*) *bodhichitta*, and refers to developing the wisdom that arises from true selflessness and the awareness of a mind that is free of concepts.

The first six exercises are: viewing all sentient beings as valuable treasures to be understood with compassion; cultivating the attitude of a lowly person whose life is one of service to others; addressing and neutralizing *kleshas* (afflictions) as soon as they arise in one's mind, especially self-interest and hatred of others; treating cruel people as precious opportunities to practise tolerance and compassion; permitting others to win, happily accepting defeat for oneself; and treating the ungrateful as one's special teachers. The seventh exercise is *gtong len* (sending and receiving), in which, on inhaling, the practitioner takes in the misfortune, negativity, miseries and sufferings of others; and on exhaling, broadcasts positive energy, happiness, and good fortune to others.¹

Some *blo sbyong* texts enumerate other more general aspects of spiritual life that help to cultivate the longing for enlightenment known as *bodhichitta*. Another well-known *Kadampa* text, the twelfth-century *Blo sbyong don bdun ma* ('Seven Points of Mind Training') – which is a commentary on *Eight Verses on Mind Training* and is regarded as a complete instruction manual – lists: reflection on the rare opportunity of finding a human birth, the transitory nature of life, the imminence of death, the law of *karma*, and the troubled existence of *samsāra*; actual training in arousing *bodhichitta*; transforming the negative into the positive; devoting one's entire life to spiritual practice; and the assessment of progress in, commitment to, and general advice concerning mind training.

The practices include focused analytical reflections on one's own nature and the nature of existence. For example, all external phenomena are reflected upon as dreams and ultimately unreal. They are simply patterns in space, perceived by the senses, possessing no essential 'substance'. Similarly, a close, introspective examination of the fundamental nature of the mind leads to the realization that it is not a graspable 'something' at all. It is essentially unborn, having no origin. Like the wind in the sky, it cannot be said to start or stop or originate at some particular place. Therefore, all mental phenomena are also like dreams. The same applies to one's perception of 'I'. When given a close introspective examination, no 'I' can be grasped; there is nothing that can be isolated and labelled 'me'. Meditation on this leads to the realization that the mind has no origin, and that the notion of identity is empty. The aspiring *bodhisattva* is therefore directed not only to seek realization that everything is an empty dream, but to realize that the thought of everything being unreal is also unreal.

Behind these dreams, however, underlying the consciousness of sensory and mental phenomena, lies a more real and permanent awareness or consciousness. The purpose of *blo sbyong* practices is to learn to rest in this awareness

and to be aware of its nature, to look at the fundamental nature of the mind without conceptualizing. Further *blo sbyong* meditations include mental affirmations of compassion and good will towards others. On seeing the suffering of others, for instance, one may repeat, “May they be free from suffering. May they be quickly relieved of the causes of suffering and experience peace.”²

Similar practices are advised, covering all the points mentioned in the *Eight Verses* and *Seven Points of Mind Training*. This kind of mind training or transformation is regarded as the first step on the path of a *bodhisattva*, to be attained before attaining even the first of the ten levels (*bhūmi*) on the *bodhisattva*’s path to enlightenment. The Buddhist teacher Khenpo Chöga (b.1965) comments on a Tibetan commentary by Khenpo Kunpal (1862–1943) on Shāntideva’s *Bodhisattva-charyāvatāra*:

Anyone can achieve a frame of mind of desiring to help others without even the slightest trace of personal benefit, but this requires considerable practice. A *bodhisattva* achieves this pure motivation through mind training (*blo sbyong*) even before reaching the first *bodhisattva* level. Such a pure mindset is the very basis or root for benefiting others. To achieve such a pure frame of mind, you must constantly practise heedfulness and introspection. As long as you hold egotistical aims in your mind, you will not be able to genuinely help others.

Whether or not a *bodhisattva* is able to work for the benefit of others depends whether or not his mind is free from concern for his personal aims and whether or not he has a genuine intention to benefit others. A *bodhisattva*’s concerns for his personal aims will decrease to the same extent that he has gained trust in the sublime *dharma* and has put diligence into his practice. Therefore, *bodhisattvas* must practise with great diligence and be careful to avoid any concern for their personal aims and benefits. At all times they must practise heedfulness regarding what to do and what to avoid. At all times they must practise introspection and guard their minds against egotistical aims. *Bodhisattvas* know that if they are careless and do not guard their minds well, they can easily harm people.

Khenpo Chöga, On Bodhisattva-charyāvatāra 236:84, DNK5 pp.242–43

See also: **bodhisattva** (7.1), **gtong len**.

1. See “Blo sbyong tshig brgyad ma,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. Thrangu Rinpoche, *Seven Points of Mind Training*, SPMT.

bōkatsu (J), **bàngghè** (C) *Lit.* stick (*bō*, *bàng*) shout (*katsu*, *hè*); stick and shout, clubbing and shouting, blows and shouts; a teaching technique used primarily

in *Chán*, *Zen* and *Sŏn* (Korean) Buddhist traditions, in which the teacher responds to a student's question by shouting a reply or striking him with a stick (*kyōsaku*). *Katsu* (C. *hè*, *yīhè*) is an onomatopoeic word that represents the shout (*ho!*) that is uttered. The aim of the practice is not to admonish, punish or harm the student but, when used at the right moment, to encourage him and to awaken him from spiritual slumber – to shock him out of a conventional view of the world and analytical way of thinking, with a superficial understanding often based upon doctrine, and jolt him into a broader spiritual awareness, leading to sudden spiritual insight or even enlightenment (J. *satori*). The intention is to sweep all dualistic, discursive, and egocentric thoughts from the mind.

The practice is traditionally understood to have been introduced during the *Táng* dynasty (618–907) by Chinese *Chán* masters such as Huángbò Xīyùn, Déshān Xuānjiàn, and Línjì Yìxuán. The shout is believed to have been introduced as a teaching aid by the master Mǎzǔ Dàoyī (709–788).

Línjì Yìxuán is particularly renowned for his use of the method. Many difficult-to-understand and *kōan*-like anecdotes are related concerning Línjì, which illustrate his unconventional interactions with disciples and others. Among these is the well-known ‘four shouts of Línjì’:

The master said to a monk, “At times my shout (*yīhè*) is like the precious sword of the Diamond King (that cuts through delusion). At times my shout (*yīhè*) is like a golden-haired lion crouching on the ground (ready to pounce). At times my shout (*yīhè*) is like a grass-tipped decoy pole (used by fishermen to lure fish by providing a seemingly safe and shady refuge). At times my shout (*yīhè*) doesn’t work like a shout (*yīhè*) at all. Do you understand?” The monk started to answer, whereupon the master gave a shout (*yīhè*).

Línjì yǔlù (Record of Línjì), T47 1985:504a26–29; cf. ZTML pp.98–99

Other similar incidents include:

The master said to Lèpǔ, “Up to now, one man has used the stick (*bàng*) and another has used the shout (*hè*). Which gets closer to it?”

Lèpǔ said, “Neither gets close to it!”

The master said, “Then how would you get close to it?”

Lèpǔ gave a shout (*hè*).

The master struck him.

Línjì yǔlù (Record of Línjì), T47 1985:504a5–7, ZTML p.94

And likewise, in an incident where Línjì makes a wordplay on the traditional salutation with which novices entering a monastery were greeted (“Well come, monk!”):

The master said to a nun, “Well come or ill come?”

The nun gave a shout (*hè*).

The master picked up his stick (*hè*) and said, “Speak then, speak!”

The nun shouted once more.

The master struck her.

Línjì yǔlù (Record of Línjì), T47 1985:504b1–2, ZTML p.99

Shouts and blows are mentioned throughout the well-known *Hekiganroku* (J. ‘Blue Cliff Record’) and *Mumonkan* (‘Gateless Gate’) compilation of *kōans* and commentary that speak throughout of the blows and shouts of *Zen* and *Chán* masters, especially of the *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) school. These masters include Dēshān Xuānjiàn (J. Tokusan Senkan) and Línjì Yìxuán. According to a commentary on the *Hekiganroku* by the *Zen* master Engo Kokugon (1063–1135):

Even if blows from the stick fall like raindrops and the *katsu* shouts sound like thunder, you are still far short of the truth of Buddhism. Even the *buddhas* of the three worlds can only nod to themselves, and the patriarchs of all ages do not exhaustively demonstrate its profundity. The whole treasury of *sūtras* is inadequate to expound its deep meaning. Even the clearest-eyed monks fail to save themselves.

Engo, Hekiganroku 2, TZC p.149

Referring to an allied text, the *Mumonkan*, modern commentator Katsuki Sekida (1893–1987), relates a typical *Zen* story:

When Hyakujō was about to go out into the world as a *Zen* master, he went up to Basō. Seeing Hyakujō coming, Basō looked at a *hossu* (a baton with a tuft of white horsehair at one end) which was hanging at the corner of his seat. He took up the *hossu* and set it upright. Hyakujō said, “Are you in the use of it or apart from the use of it?” Basō hung the *hossu* as it was before.

After a little while, Basō asked Hyakujō, “Henceforth, how do you use those two lips of yours for others’ sake?” Hyakujō took up the *hossu* and set it upright.

Basō asked, “Are you in the use of it or apart from the use of it?” Hyakujō hung the *hossu* as it was before.

That very moment, Basō, gathering all his majestic power, gave a loud shout, “*Katsu!*”, and Hyakujō came to a great enlightenment. In his later years, Hyakujō told Ōbaku of this great shout, saying, “My ears were deafened for three days by this great shout of Basō’s.”

Katsuki Sekida, on Mumonkan, Case 30, TZC p.99

brāhmamuhūrta (S/H), **Brahm mahūrat** (H/Pu) *Lit.* God's (*Brahma*, *Brahman*) time of day (*muhūrta*); God's time; early morning, one and a half hours before dawn. According to an ancient Hindu division of time, a day is divided into thirty *muhūrtas*, one *muhūrta* being equal to forty-eight minutes. The thirty *muhūrtas* are individually named, running in sequence from sunrise. As the time of sunrise changes, so do the times of the individual *muhūrtas*.

Vedic texts generally recommend one or more particular *muhūrtas* for the performance of various rites. It has been traditional among Hindus to begin or to avoid beginning significant activities, such as religious rites, according to the character of a particular *muhūrta*.

During *brāhmamuhūrta*, the *sattva guṇa* (of harmony, peace, and balance) prevails in nature, with calmness and peace all around. Hence, this is regarded in Indian thought as the best or most auspicious time for meditation and contemplation. It is mentioned in a number of Indian texts:

Let him wake up in the *muhūrta* sacred to *Brahman* and think of (acquiring) spiritual merit and treasure.

Manu Smṛiti 4:92; cf. *SBE25* p.143

The time early in the morning, one and a half hours before sunrise, is called *brāhmamuhūrta*. During this *brāhmamuhūrta*, spiritual activities are recommended. Spiritual activities performed early in the morning have a greater effect than in any other part of the day.

Swami Prabhupada, on Bhāgavata Purāṇa 3:20.46, *SB4* p.132

The *Agni Purāṇa* says that a devotee should wake up at this time and engage in prayer and meditation:

Arise during the *brāhmamuhūrta* and contemplate the deities *Vishṇu* and others.

Agni Purāṇa 155:1; cf. *APG2* p.436

The Bengali author A.K. Datta writes:

The time of the day most suited to repetition (*jap*) is *brāhmamuhūrta* or the period sacred to *Brahma*. Devotees prefer this best. Saintly Muslim poets say that at this time the morning breeze brings messages from the Most High to His devotees, and they send back their messages to Him.

A.K. Datta, Bhaktiyoga, BYAD p.181

See also: **amrit velā**.

brahmavihāra (S/Pa), **tshangs pa'i gnas** (T), **fānzhù** (C), **bonjū** (J) *Lit.* divine (*brahmā*, *tshangs*, *fān*) dwellings (*vihāra*, *gnas*, *zhù*); the sublime abodes, divine states of mind, divine abidings; stations or abodes of *Brahmā*; four classical meditation topics (*kammaṭṭhāna*) mentioned frequently in the Pali *suttas*; listed in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the *suttas*) as four of the forty meditation objects and topics; also called the four *appamaññās* (Pa. illimitables, infinitudes, immeasurables, boundless states). *Vihāra* means 'dwelling' or 'abode', and in this context it refers to a state of mind in which a person dwells or lives. The English word, 'dwelling' is not generally used for a state of mind, although attitudes and states of mind are indeed 'places' where a person can be said to live. *Brahmavihāra*, therefore, has no simple English translation, as the variety of translations suggests.

The four (*catu*) *brahmavihāras* are: lovingkindness (S. *maitrī*, Pa. *mettā*); compassion (S/Pa. *karuṇā*) for and empathy with the sufferings of others; altruistic or empathetic joy, happiness for others, genuine happiness concerning the virtues, welfare and success of others (S/Pa. *muditā*); and equanimity, neutrality, or evenness of mind (S. *upekshā*, Pa. *upekkhā*). Although not all authorities are in agreement, Buddhaghosa, who devotes a long section of his *Visuddhimagga* to the subject of the *brahmavihāras*,¹ says that meditation on the first three can result in attainment of the first three of the four lower *jhānas*, but only meditation on *upekkhā* can result in attainment of the fourth *jhāna*, whose primary characteristic is *upekkhā* born of *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness). *Upekkhā* is a balanced, peaceful and blissful state of consciousness that neither clings to anything nor is averse to anything.

The practice of meditation on the *brahmavihāras* (*brahmavihāra bhāvanā*) entails imbibing the quality of a *brahmavihāra*, such as lovingkindness, into oneself, filling one's mind with it such that one is completely pervaded by it. Then one mentally and consciously radiates it outwards, methodically covering all the six directions (north, south, east, west, up, and down), so that lovingkindness pervades the entire world and reaches all sentient beings – family, local community, country, and far beyond. Each of the four *brahmavihāras* counters a particular negative trait or unwholesome (Pa. *akusala*) state of mind. Thus, lovingkindness counters ill will, hatred, malevolence, and hostility (S/Pa. *vyāpāda*); compassion counters harmfulness and cruelty (S/Pa. *vihiṃsā*); true happiness over the welfare of others counters aversion, jealousy and discontent (S/Pa. *arati*) at the success or happiness of others; and equanimity counters greed for sensual desires (*rāga*). Hence, Buddhaghosa says, referring to the *Dīgha Nikāya*:²

The general purpose of these four divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*) is the bliss of insight (*vipassanā*) and an excellent existence. That peculiar to each is, respectively, the warding off of ill will, and so on. For here lovingkindness (*mettā*) has the purpose of warding off ill will

(*vyāpāda*), while the others have the respective purposes of warding off cruelty (*vihiṃsā*), aversion (*arati*), and greed or lust (*rāga*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 9:97, PTSV p.318, PPVM p.312

In a Buddhist context, the word *brahmā* has an interesting background. In Vedic times, *brahmā* referred to the holy, sacred or transcendent power that sustains all levels of the universe. By the time of the Buddha, however, its meaning had developed in two distinct directions. On the one hand, there was *Brahman*, the supreme Reality of the *Upanishads*; on the other, *Brahmā*, the mythological Hindu creator deity and prominent member of the Hindu pantheon. According to the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha interpreted *Brahmā* as a collection of deities (*devas*) or celestial beings who dwelt in *brahmaloka* (world of *Brahmā*), which he also called *rūpaloka* (world of subtle forms, patterns, or archetypes). The twenty realms comprising *rūpaloka* and the formless realm (*arūpaloka*) that lies beyond would seem to be equivalent to the astral and higher realms of Western terminology. *Brahmaloka* or *rūpaloka* is the realm through which the meditator passes while practising the first four *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). As forms of meditation, therefore, the *brahmavihāras* are understood to be able to lead the meditator into the realm of *brahmaloka*.

The Buddha says in a number of places that those of his disciples who meditate on any of the four *brahmavihāras* will be reborn in *brahmaloka* after their death. In the *Mettā Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya* he maintains that after their allotted span in that region, they will attain *nibbāna*:

Here, *bhikkhus*, some person dwells pervading one direction with a mind imbued with lovingkindness (*mettā*), likewise the second direction, the third direction, and the fourth direction. Thus above, below, across and everywhere, and to all as to himself, he dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with lovingkindness, vast, exalted, measureless, without enmity, without ill will. He relishes it, desires it, and finds satisfaction in it. If he is firm in it, focused on it, often dwells in it and has not lost it when he dies, he is reborn in companionship with the *devas* of *Brahmā*'s company. The lifespan of the *devas* of *Brahmā*'s company is an aeon. . . . The Blessed One's disciple remains there all his life, and when he has completed the entire lifespan of those *devas*, he attains final *nibbāna* in that very same state of existence.

Anguttara Nikāya 4:125, Mettā Sutta, PTSA2 pp.128–29; cf. NDBB pp.507–8

The passage then repeats in a similar manner for each of the three other *brahmavihāras*. One who “dwells pervading the entire world with a mind imbued with compassion (*karuṇā*)” is “reborn in companionship with the *devas* of streaming radiance” who have a lifespan of “two aeons”. Those who

meditate on empathetic joy (*muditā*) are reborn among “*devas* of streaming radiance” who live for “four aeons”; and meditators on equanimity (*upekkhā*) find companionship with “*devas* of great fruit” who live for “five hundred aeons”.³ In this *sutta*, the Buddha is comparing the fates of the different kinds of people who live in this world. The Buddha also says, in respect of one who meditates on the four *brahmavihāras*, “With the dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in companionship with the *devas* (deities) of the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*).”⁴

This commonly repeated description of meditation on the four *brahmavihāras* appears at a number of places in the Pali *suttas*.⁵ In the *Makhādeva Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*, the Buddha describes how King Makhādeva renounced the world, “shaved off his hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from home life into homelessness”, and thenceforward, using the familiar phraseology, meditates on the four *brahmavihāras*. Following this, says the Buddha, “By developing the four divine dwellings (*cattāro brahmavihārā*), upon dissolution of the body, after death, he passed on to *brahmaloka*.”⁶

A similar observation is found in the *Subha Sutta*, when someone asks the Buddha a question concerning “the path to the company of *Brahmā*”, by which all “limiting *kamma* (S. *karma*)” is transcended and the mind is liberated. The Buddha replies:

What is the path to the company of *Brahmā*? Here a *bhikkhu* abides pervading one direction with a mind imbued with lovingkindness (*mettā*), likewise the second, . . . *etc.* When the liberation of mind (*ceto-vimutti*) by lovingkindness (*mettā*) is developed in this way, no limiting *kamma* remains there, none persists there. Just as a vigorous trumpeter could make himself heard without difficulty in all four directions, so too, when the liberation of mind by lovingkindness (*mettā*) is developed in this way, no limiting *kamma* remains there, none persists there. This is the path to the company of *Brahmā*.

Majjhima Nikāya 99, *Subha Sutta*, PTSM2 pp.207–8; cf. MDBB p.816

Following the standard formula, the passage then repeats the same assertion for compassion, happiness at others’ welfare, and equanimity. The *Karajakāya Sutta* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, in which the Buddha talks about the elimination of *kamma*, concludes this standard description of meditation on lovingkindness with the assertion of a monk who has practised it: “Previously, my mind (*citta*) was limited and undeveloped, but now it is measureless and well developed. No measurable *kamma* remains or persists there.”⁷

The Pali *suttas* present a somewhat distant and broad-brush perspective on the practice of the *brahmavihāras*. Individual meditation teachers, on the other hand, take a more immediate and practical approach to the subject.

A present-day *Theravāda* monk, Thanissaro Bhikkhu, after analysing the interrelationship of the four *brahmavihāras*, points out that filling oneself with these ideal sentiments is not always so easy:

Brahmās are gods who live in the higher heavens, dwelling in an attitude of unlimited goodwill, unlimited compassion, unlimited empathetic joy, and unlimited equanimity. These unlimited attitudes can be developed from the more limited versions of these emotions that we experience in the human heart.

Of these four emotions, goodwill (*mettā*, lovingkindness) is the most fundamental. It's the wish for true happiness, a wish you can direct to yourself or to others. Goodwill was the underlying motivation that led the Buddha to search for awakening and to teach the path to awakening to others after he had found it.

The next two emotions in the list are essentially applications of goodwill. Compassion (*karuṇā*) is what goodwill feels when it encounters suffering – it wants the suffering to stop. Empathetic joy (*muditā*) is what goodwill feels when it encounters happiness – it wants the happiness to continue. Equanimity (*upekkhā*) is a different emotion, in that it acts as an aid to and a check on the other three. When you encounter suffering that you can't stop no matter how hard you try, you need equanimity to avoid creating additional suffering and to channel your energies to areas where you *can* be of help. In this way, equanimity isn't cold-hearted or indifferent. It simply makes your goodwill more focused and effective.

Making these attitudes limitless requires work. It's easy to feel goodwill, compassion and empathetic joy for people you like and love, but there are bound to be people you dislike – often for very good reasons. Similarly, there are many people for whom it's easy to feel equanimity – people you don't know or don't really care about. But it's hard to feel equanimity when people you love are suffering. Yet if you want to develop the *brahmavihāras*, you have to include all of these people within the scope of your awareness so that you can apply the proper attitude no matter where or when.

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, Head & Heart Together, HHTT

In present times, the practice of *brahmavihāra bhāvanā* is popular, especially meditating on and radiating lovingkindness (*mettā bhāvanā*), although details of the practice can vary. A meditator can radiate lovingkindness while walking or sitting, to a single person or to many. When a meditator has chosen a particular person or group of people for the practice, the meditation proceeds very much along the lines of meditation upon the other subjects listed among the forty classical meditation subjects. Accompanied by appropriate

recitations, the meditator forms a suitable mental image (*nimitta*) of a particular individual or group. By this means, the practitioner passes through the preparatory (*parikamma*), threshold or access (*upacāra*), and fixed (*appanā*) stages of concentration (*samādhi*), which is accompanied by entry into the first *jhāna*. By degrees, the other *jhānas* are attained, although, following Buddhaghosa, it is commonly said that entry to the fourth of the four lower *jhānas* is only possible through *upekkhā bhāvanā*.

A Malaysian Buddhist monk, Venerable Sujiva (b.1951), describes something of the practice and experience of *mettā bhāvanā*, although he does not claim to be an adept.⁸ According to his description, the meditator must first choose a suitable person on whom to focus *mettā*. Possible subjects are classified in five categories: a lovable person (*piya-puggala*), an intimate person (*atipiya-puggala*), a neutral person (*majjhatta-puggala*), a repulsive person (*apiya-puggala*), and a hostile person (*verī-puggala*). The beginner is advised to choose a lovable person. Generally, a person of the opposite sex is avoided, or someone with whom the meditator is very close, because the attachment will bring other things to mind at the time of meditation. When good progress towards deep *mettā* concentration has been developed, then – in order to deepen the concentration – the meditator may switch to someone from a more difficult category for whom it is less easy to feel lovingkindness.

The preparatory (*parikamma*) or initial stages are accompanied by recitations in order to help focus the mind. Such recitations are personal statements of intent. For the first few minutes the meditator may instil basic intention into the mind by reciting a refrain such as:

May I be free from enmity.
 May I be free from mental suffering.
 May I be free from physical suffering.
 May I take care of myself happily.

Venerable Sujiva, Loving-kindness Meditation; cf. LKMS pp.18–19

Then he can move on to reciting the good qualities of the lovable person, such as, “So-and-so is compassionate” or “understanding”, and so forth. Whenever the focus on *mettā* slips, the mind is brought back to focus by the repetition of such refrains. When this has been accomplished with a fair degree of concentration, the initial refrain can be repeated, with the lovable person as the subject rather than the meditator. Other good qualities of the person, or things that he has done, can also be brought to mind.

When inner concentration has reached a suitable stage, an image (*nimitta*) of the person chosen as the subject can be formed in the mind, and held there, accompanied by the recitations. Sujiva says, “Some degree of one-pointedness or calmness is reached when radiating *mettā* to the person, as one is involved

with active recitations.” As concentration deepens, the internal *nimitta* becomes clearer. *Parikamma nimittas* (preliminary images) may initially appear as “very gross” images of the person, but gradually they develop into “fine, transparent-like visualizations at access concentration. . . . I remember that the first time I noticed it, the person was outlined on a crystal-clear surface. It has since appeared again in another way.” Access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*) is attained when it seems as if one is “about to sink or merge” into the *nimitta*.⁹ Sujiva continues:

By then one has overcome the hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*), as it is close to fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*). The mind has reached a very subtle and sleep-like state. If one is not careful, one may fall asleep. One has to be mindful to maintain the flow of *mettā* and yet not be so energetic that it stirs up a restless state. In this state, visions may creep in, but one has to be mindful enough to maintain the flow of *mettā*. The *Visuddhimagga* describes this state as a state when the barriers are broken. That is, at that time one’s *mettā* is developed to the state that it is as if you are one with the person.

Venerable Sujiva, *Loving-kindness Meditation*; cf. *LKMS* p.30

The five hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) referred to are: sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*) of any kind in the field of the five senses; ill will (*vyāpāda*) of any sort; sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); restlessness and anxiety (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and wavering doubt or lack of conviction (*vicikicchā*). While these five are active, the mind remains constantly distracted, and finds it hard to focus. Even the initial stages of concentration require that they are at least in abeyance, though they may arise again after the period of meditation is over.

Sujiva then describes how access or threshold concentration becomes fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and the meditator enters the first *jhāna*:

When the mind becomes fixed onto the object (*nimitta*), it sinks and merges into it to become as if one. The result is the development of a different form of consciousness called *jhāna-citta* (absorption of the mind). Very often people say that this is like falling into a state deeper than sleep. Yet on emerging one is aware that at that time, one was in bliss and was still feeling *mettā* for the person. It has been claimed that the state is so sleep-like that one may not be aware that one has entered into it, especially when it first occurs for only very brief moments. However, with frequency, it should become obvious. How long one takes to reach up to this level depends very much on individual capability. But if we go into intensive meditation, it should not take too long.

Venerable Sujiva, *Loving-kindness Meditation*; cf. *LKMS* p.31

Having attained this degree of meditation, the meditator can then progress through the categories of individual (from lovable to hostile), following which he can move on to choosing particular groups as the focus for radiating *mettā*. A group is more difficult, because an image (*nimitta*) of an unspecified group of beings cannot be formed as readily as the image of a particular individual. Nevertheless, the practice helps to universalize one's sense of lovingkindness. Several classes of unspecified beings are enumerated for this practice, including: all human beings; all celestial beings; all worldly minded people; people of all races; all those beings in unhappy states such as animals, ghosts, or those in hell; and so forth.

Mettā bhāvanā can also be practised as extending in all directions. The Buddha speaks of extending the *brahmavihāras* in six directions, to which later practitioners have added the four intervening directions (southeast, southwest, etc.). All these instances of *mettā bhāvanā* are accompanied by appropriate recitations, at least in the initial stages before the mind has become completely absorbed in contemplation of the *nimitta*. The subject of the initial recitation, for example, can be replaced by "all human beings", "all living things", "all beings", etc.

Finally, in daily life, radiating *mettā* (or the other *brahmavihāras* as appropriate) can be practised, whether to family, friends, associates, to complete strangers, or to the whole environment. In addition to the blissful expansion of consciousness that is enjoyed, the other result of all these meditations is that a person becomes a better human being. Love is the primary virtue from which all others flow, and in someone who has love, all the other good human qualities automatically rise to the surface. Then life becomes significantly easier not only for the meditator, but also for those with whom he comes into contact. The practice is also mentioned and encouraged in Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*:

The mind (*chitta*) becomes purified by cultivating feelings
of benevolence (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*) and joy (*muditā*),
as well as neutrality and indifference (*upekṣhaṇa*)
in pleasure or pain, virtue or vice.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:33

He also says:

(By *saṁyama*, concentration) on benevolence (*maitrī*) and so on,
strengthening of that quality can be acquired.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:24

The Venerable Sujiva says that the practice of *mettā* and *brahmavihāra bhāvanā* can work miracles in all situations and with all sentient beings.

“The mind, we believe, is a powerful force”:

Once, a friend said she had disagreements with a member of the family who shared the same house with her. I told her to do *mettā* regularly to that person. Strangely enough the situation changed and they became close. She was surprised because she admitted that her concentration was really not too deep. Life will be much happier if all of us are very good friends.

Venerable Sujiva, Loving-kindness Meditation, LKMS p.82

Radiating compassion to sick people can heal them or at the very least make them feel better. In the forest, *mettā* helps to overcome fears and avert danger: “Animals are normally very sensitive to *mettā* and may sometimes respond better than humans!” Sujiva then concludes:

Of all these miracles, the greatest miracle *mettā* gives is the miracle of purification. When we have *mettā*, our defilements are overcome. Special reference can be made here to ill will or anger. It soothes us as much as an antidote that removes the snake’s poison that burns in the body.

Venerable Sujiva, Loving-kindness Meditation, LKMS p.84

See also: **jhāna**, **karuṇā** (►4), **maitrī** (►4), **muditā** (8.1), **upekkhā** (8.1).

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 9, PTSV pp.295–325.
2. *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Saṅgīti Sutta*, PTSD3 pp.248–50.
3. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:125, *Mettā Sutta*, PTSA2 pp.129–30; cf. NDBB pp.508–9.
4. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:126, *Mettā Sutta*, PTSA2 p.130; cf. NDBB pp.509–10.
5. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 43 (*Mahāvedalla Sutta*), 97 (*Dhanañjāni Sutta*), PTSM1 p.297, PTSM2 p.195.
6. *Majjhima Nikāya* 83, *Makhādeva Sutta*, PTSM2 pp.76–78; cf. MDBB pp.693–94.
7. *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:219, *Karajakāya Sutta*, PTSA5 pp.299–301, NDBB p.1542.
8. Venerable Sujiva, *Loving-kindness Meditation, LKMS*.
9. Venerable Sujiva, *Loving-kindness Meditation*; cf. LKMS pp.30–31.

buddhānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of the Buddha. See **anussati**.

bù xíng ér xíng (C), **fugyō-nigyō** (J) *Lit.* not (*bù, fu*) practising (*xíng, gyō*) yet (*ér, ni*) practising (*xíng, gyō*); not doing yet doing; *Chán* and *Zen*

Buddhist expressions meaning to practise meditation without expectation, calculation, or forced effort; to meditate effortlessly, selflessly, naturally, and spontaneously.

cāgānuṣṣati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anuṣṣati*) of one's own generosity (*cāga*) or liberality. See **anuṣṣati**.

cānchán (C) *Lit.* to practise (*cān*) *Chán* Buddhist meditation; in Daoism, to sit in meditation. See **meditation (Daoism)**.

cankama (Pa), **chankrama** (S), **'chag pa** (T), **jīngxíng** (C), **kinhin**, **kyōgyō** (J) *Lit.* terraced walkway, promenade; walking up and down; in Buddhism, walking meditation or mindful walking; one of the four postures (Pa. *iryāpatha*) in which Buddhist meditation is traditionally practised, *viz.* walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. *Chankrama* (S) and *cankama* (Pa) also refer to the itinerant life of a mendicant.

According to Buddhist tradition, the Buddha passed the third week following his enlightenment practising *cankama*. The site of his walk is preserved as a raised platform called the *Cankama* at Bodhi Gaya in the state of Bihar, India. This is where the Buddha is said to have received enlightenment, and is one of the most venerated Buddhist pilgrimage sites. The *Cankama* is a long, narrow masonry platform, hung with garlands, the footsteps of the Buddha being represented by fresh lotus flowers.

In the *Cankama Sutta*, the Buddha enumerates the several benefits of walking meditation:

These are the five rewards for one who practises walking meditation (*cankama*). Which five? He can endure travelling by foot; he can endure exertion; he becomes free from disease; whatever he has eaten and drunk, chewed and savoured, becomes well digested; the concentration he wins while doing walking meditation lasts for a long time.

Anguttara Nikāya 5:29, Cankama Sutta, PTS3 pp.29–30, ANTB

No further instructions are to be found in the Pali *suttas*, but the received wisdom is that while walking, the mind should be kept consciously occupied either with the thought of walking, or with a continuation of the visualizations or other practices that have been the focus of seated meditation. *Cankama* is thus deemed to be a part of the practice of mindfulness of the body (Pa. *kāyānupassanā*, *kāyagatāsati*). Ajahn Chah (1918–1992), a well-known teacher of the Thai Forest Tradition, makes some practical suggestions:

When you're practising walking meditation (*cankama*), have a walking path, say from one tree to another, about fifty feet in length. Walking *cankama* is the same as sitting meditation. Focus your awareness: "Now, I am going to put forth effort. With strong recollection and self-awareness I am going to pacify my mind." The object of concentration depends on the person. Find what suits you. Some people spread *mettā* (lovingkindness) to all sentient beings and then, leading with their right foot, walk at a normal pace, using the *mantra* "*Buddho* (Buddha)" in conjunction with the walking – continually being aware of that object. If the mind becomes agitated then stop, calm the mind, and then resume walking. Constantly self-aware: aware at the beginning of the path, aware at every stage of the path, the beginning, the middle, and the end. Make this knowing continuous.

This is a method, focusing on walking *cankama*. Walking *cankama* means walking to and fro. It's not easy. Some people see us walking up and down and think we're crazy. They don't realize that walking *cankama* gives rise to great wisdom. Walk to and fro. If you're tired then stand and still your mind. Focus on making the breathing comfortable. When it is reasonably comfortable, then switch the attention to walking again,

Ajahn Chah, Teachings of Ajahn Chah, TACD p.77

In *Zen* Buddhism, mindful walking (*kinhin*) is used to break up long sessions of sitting meditation (*zazen*) in order to move the limbs, restore feeling and blood circulation to the legs, and shake off drowsiness. *Zazen* sessions spanning several hours are generally broken up into fifty minutes of sitting, followed by ten minutes of walking, with a bell being struck by the meditation trainer (*jikijitsu*) to sound the changeovers. Several variations of speed and style are prevalent among the different East Asian Buddhist schools. The prescribed speed varies from very slow, almost standing still, with each half step accompanied by a full respiration (as in the *Sōtō* school), to a fast, even jogging or running speed (as in the *Rinzai* school). Meditators may walk back and forth along a prescribed straight path of even ground approximately fifty feet long, or they may make circuits of the meditation hall. *Kinhin* is also regarded as a link between the stillness of *zazen* and the activity of the day. The somewhat loose Western understanding of the practice as any variety of mindful walking is a misconception.¹

Specific hand and arm postures are adopted during the practice, notably *shashu* and *issshu*. In the traditional *shashu* posture, the thumb of the left hand is folded into the left palm, forming a fist around it. The fist is placed in the centre of the chest with the palm inwards, and is covered with the right hand, the hands inside the sleeves of the robe. The elbows are held away from the body, the forearms parallel to the floor. In the *issshu* posture, the fist is held with the thumb side against the chest.

Given the prevalence of the practice in modern times, it is surprising that Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the Japanese *Zen* master who founded the *Sōtō Zen* school, provides no details on the subject in his monumental work, the *Shōbōgenzō*. In fact, throughout the works attributed to him, passing references to *kinhin* are only found in a scattered and incomplete form. He mentions the practice here and there, with no fuller explanation, as for instance:

When one patch-robed monk asked in all sincerity whether repairs might be made (to the dilapidated meditation hall), the old master turned down the request, saying, “Our Buddha has said that this period of time corresponds to the degenerate aeon, and that even high cliffs and deep valleys shift and change, never remaining constant. So, how can we possibly seek to sate ourselves by fulfilling our every wish? The saintly ones of olden times, for the most part, did their walking meditation (*kinhin*) on bare ground beneath the trees. This was the ancient and exemplary way of practice, a profound custom that went far beyond simply the form of walking. You have all left home life behind in order to pursue the Way, but you still have not learned how to use your hands and feet harmoniously. A monk’s life lasts barely some forty or fifty years. Who has time to waste in vain pursuits, such as making ostentatious buildings?”

Eihei Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō, Gyoji, T82 2582:131a7–15, STH (29) p.389

Kinhin, with its established methods and rituals known today, seems to have been introduced by Menzan Zuihō (1683–1769), a Japanese scholar and abbot of two *Sōtō Zen* temples, in his very brief (one page in a modern edition) text, the *Kinhinki*, and in his short collection of notes and commentary on this text, the *Kinhinki-Monge*. The *Kinhinki* contains short phrases drawn from writings attributed to Dōgen, such as the autobiographical reminiscences in his *Hōkyōki*. Linking these with passages from widely accepted texts such as the *Lotus Sūtra*, Menzan conveys the impression that the instructions concerning the ritual that he pieces together are authenticated by Dōgen himself. According to David Riggs:

In the *Kinhinki* and his commentary, Menzan wove together scattered phrases from Dōgen into a paragraph of ritual instructions. To this he added bits and pieces of texts that either carry the authority of the Buddhist mainstream or are the reports of a traveller to or from India. He attempted to show that the way of walking meditation of Dōgen is both the true way and is different from the practice of walking in a circle around a Buddha statue. . . .

It is not at all clear how many *Sōtō* monks were doing this kind of *kinhin*, and Menzan does not discuss how it was incorporated into the

monastic routine. This style of *kinhin* was probably borrowed from (the) *Ōbaku* (school of *Zen*), like many monastic practices in both *Sōtō* and *Rinzai Zen*. Menzan's prescription for *kinhin* is entirely different from this style and is very close to the posture and pace of present-day *Sōtō* ritual. There is, however, nothing at all in Menzan's writing about how to integrate it with seated meditation, and so the modern practice of a fixed period of walking between two consecutive periods of seated meditation cannot be attributed to Menzan. The striking feature of his prescription, pacing the slow walk with the breath, is a characteristic ritual in modern *Sōtō*, and as far as I have been able to determine, is unique to Japanese *Sōtō Zen*. It is apparently not found in any document prior to the *Hōkyōki*, where Rūjīng (Dōgen's Chinese master) himself says that it is unknown to others. The other details such as how exactly to hold the hands and the length of time to stop after turning around are not found in Dōgen, nor any texts that Dōgen uses. Menzan is obliged to find textual evidence elsewhere, and he has to go very far afield from the usual *Zen* sources, but his ritual instructions have been faithfully preserved as if from Dōgen himself.

Ritual detail is one area where one would expect that personal, hands-on instruction would be paramount, but Menzan utterly ignores contemporary custom in the *Kinhinki* except to disparage it. He never refers to what he must have learned from his own teacher, and he even dares to point out that Bodhidharma had read all the available translated scriptures, and therefore, the *Zen* maxim of "Not relying on words and letters" needs to be reconsidered. The very texts that Menzan uses, however, stress the importance of personal teaching or of face-to-face transmission, which is indeed a hallmark of the *Zen* mythos. This is especially clear in the *Hōkyōki*, which depicts Rūjīng as the only source for the proper style of *kinhin*, a fact that Menzan affirms: he finds no other authority for this practice.

Menzan took this core, which was unknown outside of his lineage, and wove an impressive web of Buddhist textual authority around it. He added details where needed from these sources and situated the ritual in the context of mainstream Buddhist practice, while keeping its unique *Sōtō* elements. He took cold fragments of texts and brought a ritual to life from these unpromising phrases. As a result of Menzan's efforts, the *Kinhinki* became an accepted part of the ritual literature and the *kinhin* ritual became a living orthodoxy that has been passed on from master to disciple. Thanks to his textual research, his persuasion and his self-effacement, there is now a traditional ritual of walking meditation that is a characteristic of *Sōtō Zen*, strictly preserved and transmitted to Buddhist practitioners around the world.

David Riggs, "Meditation in Motion," in *ZRZB* pp.256–58

1. See David Riggs, "Meditation in Motion," in *ZRZB* pp.223–58.

ceaseless prayer, constant prayer, continuous prayer, prayer without ceasing, unceasing prayer An internal and spiritual state or attitude of constant remembrance of God; ceaseless awareness of the divine presence within; specifically, in the Orthodox Church, the ceaseless repetition of the prayer of Jesus. In Christianity, the ideal of ceaseless prayer is commonly associated with Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, where he advises, "Pray without ceasing."¹ However, he does not expand on what he means by it.

The seventh-century Isaac of Nineveh seems to understand constant prayer as a spiritual state of being, in which the soul is continually aware of the Spirit within:

If a man has not received in truth the gift of the Comforter, it is not possible for him to accomplish constant prayer in quiet. When the Spirit takes its dwelling place in a man, he does not cease to pray, because the Spirit will constantly pray in him. Then, neither when he sleeps, nor when he is awake, will prayer be cut off from his soul; but when he eats and when he drinks, when he lies down or when he does any work, even when he is immersed in sleep, the perfumes of prayer will breathe in his soul spontaneously. And henceforth he will not possess prayer at limited times, but always; and when he has outward rest, even then prayer is ministered unto him secretly. For the silence of the serene is prayer. . . . For their deliberations are divine impulses. The motions of the pure mind are quiet voices with which they secretly chant psalms to the Invisible One.

Isaac of Nineveh, Treatises 35, On Excellence, MTIN p.174

The medieval English mystic Richard Rolle regards a constant attitude of prayer as essential for inner recollection: "Constant prayer greatly helps to acquire and retain this stability of mind."² Likewise, Walter Hilton regards continuous prayer as a prerequisite for spiritual progress: "Pray continually if you want to gain the grace of devotion for yourself, and to make progress in the way of Christ."³

Speaking specifically of the prayer of Jesus and linking it to Paul's injunction, the fourteenth-century Patriarch of Constantinople, Kallistos I, says:

Unceasing prayer consists in an unceasing invocation of the Name of God. Whether talking, sitting, walking, making something, eating or occupied in some other way, one should at all times and in every place call upon the name of God, according to the command of scripture: "Pray without ceasing."

Kallistos I, in OPI p.62

Other monks of the Orthodox tradition have expressed a similar understanding. There is nothing outward about this prayer:

Unceasing prayer is prayer that does not leave the soul day or night. It consists not in what is outwardly perceived – outstretched hands, bodily stance, or verbal utterance – but in our inner concentration on the activity of the spirit (*nous*) and on remembrance (*mnēmē*) of God. . . . It can be perceived spiritually by those capable of such perception.

You can devote yourself constantly to prayer only when your thoughts are mustered under the command of the spirit (*nous*), delving in profound peace and reverence into the depths of God and seeking therein to taste the sweet waters of contemplation. When this peace is not present, such prayer is impossible. Only when your soul's powers are pacified through spiritual knowledge can you attain constant prayer.

Nikētas Stēthatos, On the Inner Nature of Things 74–75, Philokalia; cf. PCT4 p.128

The purpose of continuous prayer is to keep the mind in a state of constant internal mindfulness and awareness of the Divine:

Negligence is to be dreaded. We must pray unceasingly lest some thought comes and separates us from God, distracting our mind (*nous*) from Him. For the pure heart, being completely receptive to the Holy Spirit, mirrors God in His entirety.

Anon., On Abba Philēmon, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 pp.353–54

Watchfulness and the Jesus prayer . . . mutually reinforce one another; for close attentiveness goes with constant prayer, while prayer goes with close watchfulness and attentiveness of mind (*nous*).

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 94, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.178

Such internal vigilance prepares the mind and soul to be fully recollected at the time of prayer:

Get ready for your set time of prayer by unceasing prayer in your soul. In this way, you will soon make progress.

John Klimakos, Ladder of Ascent 28, LDAC p.278

The results of continuous repetition of the Jesus prayer are multiple. The mind is cleansed of its impurities:

It is through unceasing prayer that the mind is cleansed of the dark clouds, the tempest of the demons. And when it is cleansed, the divine light of Jesus cannot but shine in it.

Hēsychios the Priest, On Watchfulness 175, Philokalia, PCT1 p.193

It is filled with an inner spiritual strength:

If we persevere in unceasing prayer and the other virtues, there will come upon us a mighty force, infinitely stronger than any we can exert. This force cannot be described in human language; in its great strength it overcomes our worst faults of character, . . . conquering both the sinful inclinations of our soul and the disordered impulses of our body.

John of Karpathos, Encouragement of Monks 50, Philokalia, PCT1 p.310

The spiritual eyes are opened:

Through unceasing prayer and the study of the divine scriptures, the soul's spiritual eyes are opened, and they see the King of the celestial powers, and great joy and fierce longing burn intensely in the soul.

Anon., On Abba Philēmon, Philokalia; cf. PCT2 p.346

Such prayer is a divine gift, bringing with it the warmth of spiritual consolations:

God is the teacher of prayer; true prayer is the gift of God. To him who prays constantly with contrition of spirit, with the fear of God and with attention, God Himself gives gradual progress in prayer. From humble and attentive prayer, spiritual action and spiritual warmth make their appearance and quicken the heart. The quickened heart draws the mind to itself and becomes a temple of grace-given prayer and a treasury of the spiritual gifts which are procured by such prayer as a matter of course.

Ignatius Brianchaninov, On the Prayer of Jesus 8, OPJ p.66

To someone who is absorbed in this prayer, the entire world becomes sacred:

(Staretz Silouan said:) "The Lord is glorified in holy temples, while monks and anchorites praise God in their hearts. The heart of the anchorite is a temple and his mind an altar, for the Lord loves to dwell in the heart and mind of man."

And he would say, too, that when unceasing prayer becomes established in the depths of the heart all the world is transformed into a temple of God.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.75

Understanding ceaseless prayer as both a spiritual state and a particular practice, twentieth-century Quaker, Thomas Kelly, advises that a life of ceaseless prayer requires constant and persistent effort:

How shall we lay hold of that Life and Power, and live the life of prayer without ceasing? By quiet, persistent practice in turning all of our being, day and night, in prayer and inward worship and surrender, toward Him who calls in the deeps of our souls. Mental habits of inward orientation must be established. An inner, secret turning to God can be made fairly steady, after weeks and months and years of practice and lapses, and failures and returns. It is as simple an art as Brother Lawrence found it, but it may be long before we achieve any steadiness in the process.

Begin now, as you read these words, as you sit in your chair, to offer your whole selves, utterly and in joyful abandon, in quiet, glad surrender to Him who is within. In secret ejaculations of praise, turn in humble wonder to the Light, faint though it may be. Keep contact with the outer world of sense and meanings. Here is no discipline in absent-mindedness. Walk and talk and work and laugh with your friends. But behind the scenes, keep up the life of simple prayer and inward worship. Keep it up throughout the day. Let inward prayer be your last act before you fall asleep and the first act when you awake. And in time you will find, as did Brother Lawrence, that “those who have the wind of the Holy Spirit go forward even in sleep.”⁴

The first days and weeks and months are awkward and painful, but enormously rewarding. Awkward, because it takes constant vigilance and effort and reassertions of the will at the first level. Painful, because our lapses are so frequent, the intervals when we forget Him so long. Rewarding, because we have begun to live. But these weeks and months and perhaps even years must be passed through before He gives us greater and easier stayedness upon Himself. . . .

Begin where you are. Live this present moment, this present hour as you now sit in your seats, in utter, utter submission and openness toward Him. Listen outwardly to these words, but within, behind the scenes, in the deeper levels of your lives where you are all alone with God the loving eternal One, keep up a silent prayer, “Open thou my life. Guide my thoughts where I dare not let them go. But Thou darest. Thy will be done.” Walk on the streets and chat with your friends. But every moment behind the scenes be in prayer, offering yourselves in continuous obedience.

I find this internal continuous prayer life absolutely essential. It can be carried on day and night, in the thick of business, in home and school. Such prayer of submission can be so simple. It is well to use a single sentence, repeated over and over and over again, such as this: “Be Thou my will. Be Thou my will,” or “I open all before Thee. I open all before Thee,” or “See earth through heaven. See earth through heaven.” This hidden prayer life can pass, in time, beyond words and

phrases into mere ejaculations, “My God, my God, my Holy One, my Love,” or into the adoration of the *Upanishad*, “Oh Wonderful, Oh Wonderful, Oh Wonderful.”⁵ Words may cease and one stands and walks and sits and lies in wordless attitudes of adoration and submission and rejoicing and exultation and glory. . . .

If you slip and stumble and forget God for an hour, and assert your old proud self, and rely upon your own clever wisdom, don’t spend too much time in anguished regrets and self-accusations, but begin again, just where you are.

Thomas Kelly, *Testament of Devotion*, TDK pp.11–12, 33–34

See also: **monologistos euchē**, **prayer of Jesus**, **prayer of the heart**.

1. *Thessalonians* 5:17, KJV.
2. Richard Rolle, *Fire of Love* 20; cf. *FLML* p.90, *FLRR* p.107.
3. Walter Hilton, *Perfection* 2, *PAS* p.3.
4. Brother Lawrence, *Practice of the Presence of God*, *Letters* 4; cf. *PPGL* p.38.
5. *Taittirīya Upanishad* 3:10.5.

charyā tantra (S), **spyod rgyud** (T) *Lit.* practice (*charyā*) tantra; performance tantra; a small category of esoteric or tantric Buddhist texts that emphasizes practice; the second of a common three-part classification of tantric texts and practices described by the three ‘new’ schools (*Kagyū*, *Sakya*, and *Geluk*) of Tibetan Buddhism that emerged during the eleventh to fourteenth centuries CE; the fifth of the nine-vehicle (*navayāna*) stages on the spiritual path according to the older *Nyingma* (‘Old Translations’) school, who trace their origins to the eighth-century teacher and translator of Sanskrit texts, Padmasambhava; represented by a very few texts (eight, according to the Tibetan *Kanjur* collection of texts), of which the most commonly mentioned is the *Mahāvairochana-abhisambodhi Tantra* (c.C7th); also called *ubhaya tantra* (dual tantra).

This *tantra* sees the celestial *buddha* Vairochana as the primal or cosmic *buddha* who pervades all things and who not only manifested as the historical Buddha for the benefit of sentient beings, but is the ultimate cosmic source of all celestial beings. Here, a meditator’s intention is intense inner identification with Vairochana through visualization of himself as the *buddha*, by means of standard tantric practices using *maṇḍalas*, *mantras*, rituals, and so forth. In this way, the meditator comes to see the world through the eyes of Vairochana, so to speak. Vairochana appears at the centre of many *maṇḍalas*, with the other four *dhyāni buddhas* of tantric Buddhism located in the four cardinal directions. Vairochana’s role as the primal *buddha*, which appears in such *Mahāyāna* texts as the composite *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*, predates the rise

of tantric Buddhism. Unlike the *kriyā* (ritual) *tantras*, the spiritual goal of enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of transmigration figures more prominently as the primary goal of the practice.¹

Although the precise meaning of *charyā* in this context is uncertain, *charyā tantra* is said by the eighth-century Indian scholar and monk Buddhaguhya to get its name from seeking a balance between the outer and inner practices of the first and third categories of *tantra*, i.e. the outward rituals of *kriyā tantra* and the internal practices advocated by the *yoga tantras*. Because it seeks the intermediate ground between the two *tantras*, *charyā tantra* is also known as *ubhaya tantra* (dual *tantra*).

However, classification of the many and varied (maybe around 2,000) tantric texts has been retrospective, and the various classificatory systems are not always in agreement. It is also unlikely that belonging to any particular category was a part of the original authors' way of thinking, since such categories did not exist when the texts were written.

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra, kriyā tantra, navayāna.**

1. See Paul Williams, *Buddhist Thought*, BTIT pp.155–56.

chatumudrā (S), **phyag rgya bzhi** (T) *Lit.* four (*chatur, bzhi*) seals (*mudrā, phyag rgya*); the four tantric meditational *mudrās*, which are: *mahāmudrā* (T. *phyag rgya chen po*), *karma-mudrā* (T. *las kyi phyag rgya*), *dharmamudrā* (T. *chos kyi phyag rgya*), and *samaya-mudrā* (T. *dam tshig gi phyag rgya*).

Evolving over several centuries, *mahāmudrā* has come to be a catch-all term for a spectrum of Tibetan tantric teachings associated with the 'new-translation' schools (*Kagyü, Sakya, Kadampa, Geluk*, and the smaller *Jonang* tradition), which are contrasted with the *Nyingma* ('Old Translation') tradition. The primary focus of *mahāmudrā* is the pristine and primordial nature of the mind.

Definition of the four *mudrās* is confusing because the meaning can vary depending on the context; and in non-tantric Buddhist traditions, *karma*-, *dharma*- and *samaya-mudrā* possess a variety of other meanings. The Tibetan *lama*, Drikungpa Jigten Gönpö (1143–1217), founder of the *Drikung Kagyü* school, describes some of these differences.¹

Karma-mudrā is the seal or symbol of action or behaviour (*karma*). For the *Theravāda* monk (*shrāvaka*), *karma-mudrā* is conformity of speech, mind and bodily actions to the monastic code (*vinaya*). For the *Mahāyāna bodhisattva*, *karma-mudrā* is conformity in all respects to the *bodhisattva* principles. In the *anuttara-yoga* class of *tantra*, *karma-mudrā* refers to the partner in tantric sexual rites who helps the practitioner transfer him- or herself to a higher level of realization.

Likewise, *dharmamudrā* for the *shrāvaka* is understanding that an individual identity does not exist; for the *Mahāyāna bodhisattva*, having relinquished all discursive and conceptual thinking, and seeing all phenomena as illusions, *dharmamudrā* is meditation on Reality as *shūnyatā* (voidness, emptiness); and for the practitioner of *anuttara-yoga tantra*, *dharmamudrā* is merging of the mind and *prāṇas* (subtle life energies), especially in the heart *chakra* (centre). *Dharma* is a term with a wide range of meaning, from ‘teaching’ or ‘doctrine’ to the ‘path that is followed to attain enlightenment’. It can also mean ‘thing’, ‘phenomenon’, ‘practice’, and so on.

In other Buddhist schools, *dharmamudrā* can refer to three marks or seals that distinguish Buddhist teachings from non-Buddhist. The three seals can vary. In one instance, they are: *anītya* (impermanence of all things), *anātman* (lack of a permanent individuality or self), and *nirvāṇa* (ultimate Reality). In another instance, *nirvāṇa* is replaced by *duḥkha* (suffering as a characteristic of all life experience).

Samaya-mudrā for the *shrāvaka* is gaining freedom from negative emotions and attitudes through contact with his essential inner purity attained by meditation on the illusoriness of personal identity. For the *Mahāyāna bodhisattva*, *samaya-mudrā* is such a high degree of self-control and restraint that no hint of self-interest ever lies behind any thought or deed. In the *anuttara-yoga* class of *tantra*, *samaya-mudrā* is never letting commitment to *bodhisattva* principles degenerate when beginning to receive spiritual empowerment. *Samaya* means ‘bond’, ‘covenant’, ‘vow’, ‘pledge’, ‘agreement’, or ‘commitment’. In a general context, *samaya-mudrā* implies commitment to the vows taken at the time of initiation (*abhisheka*), and to all aspects of the spiritual path.

In sexual *yoga*, a *samaya-mudrā* is a fully qualified partner who is of the right age and social standing and who adheres to the commitments (*samaya*) of the tantric path. A *karma-mudrā* may not be so qualified. In this context, an additional *mudrā*, a *jñāna-mudrā*, is also mentioned. A *jñāna-mudrā* is an imagined or visualized sexual partner. In *mahāmudrā*, a sexual partner is deemed unnecessary. In some expositions, the references to sexual *yoga* are regarded as metaphors, interpreted in terms of the four blisses (*chaturānanda*). In this sense, *karma-mudrā* symbolizes bliss (*ānanda*) as the consort; *samaya-mudrā* represents the perfect bliss of the mystical union of the *yi dam* with his consort; *dharmamudrā* signifies the cessation of bliss in realization of the reality of emptiness (*shūnyatā*); and *mahāmudrā* is attainment of buddhahood.

Together with *mahāmudrā*, these three *mudrās* also constitute the four meditational *mudrās* of *yoga tantra*. *Yoga tantra* meditation involves visualization of meditational deities (*yi dam*) and *maṇḍalas*. The practice includes control of breathing and the subtle life energies (*prāṇāyāma*), repetition of *mantras* (especially seed *mantras*), and hand gestures (*mudrās*). The *yi dam* is generally one of the celestial *buddhas*. In this instance, *karma-mudrā*

refers to the use of *mudrās* that symbolize the actions (*karma*) of the *buddha*. *Dharmamudrā* corresponds to the use of the *buddha*'s particular *bīja-mantra*, which symbolizes the speech or teachings (*dharma*) of the *buddha*. *Samaya-mudrā* refers to the use of hand gestures that symbolize the mind and traditionally attributed characteristics of the *buddha*.

These *mudrās* lead to *mahāmudrā*, which is the goal of spiritual endeavour. For the *shrāvaka*, *mahāmudrā* is *nirvāṇa*, with the extinction of all imperfections and impurities. For the *bodhisattva* who has followed a path of compassion and an understanding of *shūnyatā* (emptiness, voidness) as Reality, *mahāmudrā* is the experience of true compassion and the wisdom that arises from the experience of *shūnyatā*. For the practitioner of the *anuttara-yoga* class of *tantra*, *mahāmudrā* is realization of the blissful awareness that originates from *shūnyatā*.

Explaining the meaning of these four *mudrās* entirely from the viewpoint of practitioners of the *anuttara-yoga* class of *tantra*, Drikungpa explains that *karma-mudrā* encompasses a range of tantric practices, including the six doctrines of Nāropa, such as development of the inner heat (*gtum mo*), control of the *prāṇa* (subtle life energies), and various other yogic and tantric practices. The deep awareness and blissful consciousness that arise as a result of these practices is *dharmamudrā*. Remaining unattached to this blissful awareness through a discriminating awareness of *shūnyatā* is *samaya-mudrā*; and having become entirely familiar with this state of consciousness, when the practitioner becomes entirely and spontaneously focused on *shūnyatā* alone, is *mahāmudrā*.

See also: **anuttara-yoga tantra**, **anuyoga**, **Dzogchen**, **gtum mo**, **mahāmudrā**.

1. See Alexander Berzin, *Gelug-Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, GKTm pp.126–28.

chíxīn (C) *Lit.* to control (*chí*) the mind (*xīn*); to manage or hold onto the mind.
See **zhìxīn**.

cittānupassanā (Pa), **chittānupashyanā** (S) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of consciousness or mind; the third of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). See **satipaṭṭhāna**.

concentration Focused mental attention; spiritually, inner focusing of the attention upon a verbal formula, upon a prayer, upon any object or subject chosen for meditation, upon the inner darkness and silence, upon the inner light or divine sound, upon the awareness of God and His presence, upon particular centres

within the body, and so on; meditation, recollection, repetition, remembrance of God; quietude, inner stillness and tranquillity.

The mind is scattered into material things. Filled with thoughts of the world, it cannot return to the heavenly realms unless it becomes entirely concentrated on “things divine”:

When the mind (*nous*) has been drawn down from the realm above, it will not return thither unless it is completely detached from worldly things through concentration on things divine.

Ilias the Presbyter, Gnostic Anthology 3:7, Philokalia; cf. PCT3 pp.47–48

The mind rebels against concentrated prayer, and would much rather indulge in intellectual consideration of spiritual matters:

Our mind (*nous*) often finds it hard to endure praying because of the straitness and concentration which this involves; but it joyfully turns to theology because of the broad and unhampered scope of divine speculation.

Diadochos of Photiki, On Spiritual Knowledge 68, Philokalia; cf. PCT1 p.275

Even when focused, the mind is easily blown off track by the events of life:

An unexpected event or misfortune considerably disrupts the mind’s attentiveness; and, by dislodging the mind (*nous*) from its concentration on higher realities and from its noble state of virtue, it diverts it towards sinful quarrelsomeness and wrangling.

Philotheos of Sinai, On Watchfulness 39, Philokalia; cf. PCT3 p.31

See also: **attention** (8.1), **prayer of Jesus**, **recollection**, **remembrance of God**.

concentration tools In Native North American traditions, a technique that helps to focus the mind, inducing an appropriate state for participation in religious ceremonies, thought transference, healing, or contact with the spirits and *Wakan-Tanka* (Great Spirit); a term used especially by the Lakota holy man and healer Frank Fools Crow, as described by Thomas Mails (1920–2001), an American artist and writer who developed a long-term association with Native American traditions.

These concentration or focusing tools included the three main rites of the Lakota tradition: the sun dance (*wiwanyag wachipi*), the sweat lodge (*inipi*), and the spirit-calling ritual (*yuwipi*). But when asked by Thomas Mails, Fools Crow added that anything that helps to focus the mind can be called a “concentration tool”:

“In the outside world these days,” I said, “people are talking a lot about what you call ‘concentration tools’, but they use the words, ‘focusing tools’. Do you mind if I call them that for readers who are used to the words?”

“That will be *waste* (good),” he replied.

“By ‘concentration tools’ you mean the ancient rituals and the individual ritual items that were given to your people in the beginning?”

“Thoughts too. Anything that helps us concentrate and draws us more and more into the talking that goes on with *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers is a concentrating tool.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.41–42

Fools Crow says that he learnt these methods from human teachers, as well as directly from “*Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers”. But first, purification is required so that the tools are effective and spiritual power can be used to help others. Mails summarizes the process as:

First purification; second, becoming a clean tube for the higher powers to work in; third, using the focusing tools to walk the ancient pathways where we will find guidance and ways to achieve goals; and fourth, dispensing this power to others. . . .

In his initial vision quest in 1903, Fools Crow was given a certain powerful medicine (inner powers) and numerous ways to perform healing and curing rites. In subsequent vision quests, *Wakan-Tanka* gave him powerful healing songs, and three of the most phenomenal meditation and focusing tools ever handed down to humankind. Along with his regular use of the sun dance, the purification lodge, and the *yuwipi*, his diligent employment of these songs and tools played the greatest roles in stirring up and setting loose the power that *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers had added to his own.

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.43, 67

These three concentration tools were painted sticks, adorned with pieces of coloured cloth and various other items:

One tool enabled him to do thought transference – conveying thoughts and instructions to other people, influencing them, and also learning what they were being told, thinking, and doing. A second tool (the regeneration tool) empowered him with continual strength, longevity, and regeneration by giving him a wondrous way to achieve daily rebirth, renewal, fertility, and thanksgiving. The third tool was a stunning sacred self-offering stick, whose use allowed him to continually offer his entire self for service to the higher powers. It is important

to know that Fools Crow believed we can use these same tools to accomplish everything he did.

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.67

Thomas Mails describes his first exposure to Fools Crow's thought-transference stick. A vision quest is a four-day retreat in quest of visions and spiritual experience:

In my book, *Secret Native American Pathways*, I tell about a visit I made to Fools Crow while he was guiding a vision quester at Bear Butte, and how he told me he had been sending his thoughts to and learning about the man who was on top of the butte while Fools Crow performed customary rituals at their purification lodge (sweat lodge) in a meadow far below.¹ He had used thought transference to instruct the man to make four little crosses out of sticks, to place these upright in a row in front of him, and then to offer prayers to them. Making this kind of prayer item was an unheard-of thing to do, and certainly not a standard part of the questing procedure. Also, Fools Crow related to me the details of the vision the man had already received, and said further that I was to remain to hear what the man said when he came down from the mountain. Then Fools Crow added that he would arrive within the next half hour. Minutes later, the man came walking down the winding trail, surprised and disconcerted to see me there with the holy man. When Fools Crow asked him to relate what he had seen, heard, and done during his four days and nights on the mountain, he squirmed even more, and I knew why. It was customary for only the quester's mentor to be told these personal things.

But the man obeyed, and what Fools Crow had revealed to me proved to be exactly what the man had experienced, including his being puzzled by a strange compulsion to make the four stick crosses. "Why did I do this?" he asked, after which Fools Crow looked at me and smiled broadly.

This was two-dimensional (two-way) thought transference, and to say the least an impressive performance by the old lord of the holy men. That much I have already reported . . . but not the following:

When I first arrived at Fools Crow's camp, he was in the process of sending his thoughts to the man and also obtaining more information about the man's vision. It was now that I was shown the amazing secrets of how he did it. People commonly think that all thought transference and thought receipt is done by mental concentration alone. That was not so with Fools Crow. He had been given a better way by far – which explains why

he could do it whenever he wanted to, and with a wonderful degree of accuracy.

He had seen me coming toward him across the lush meadow and stood up to greet me with a warm hug. As we exchanged greetings, I noticed that next to where he had been sitting on the grass was a cleared circular area about ten inches in diameter. The cardinal direction points were marked with little patches of coloured cloth. In the centre of the circle and standing upright in the ground was a stick that was perhaps a half inch in diameter and eight inches long. It was wrapped in a piece of red felt that was held in place by a yarn belt that was done in the directional colours. Under the felt and the next to the stick were a blue and a green feather – the colours of *Wakan-Tanka* and of Grandmother Earth. Although I could not see it, he told me that also under the felt was a lock of the man's hair and a little piece of his clothing. Tied to the belt with loops of yarn were a small stick cross, a white (downy) breath feather, some beads, and a piece of shell. The stick itself was painted red, and had three black dots painted on it to make a face. "This is him," Fools Crow said as he pointed toward the unseen top of Bear Butte. "If I am sending thoughts to or getting information from a woman, the stick is painted Grandmother Earth's colour, green."

Stuck upright in the ground at the west point of the circle's perimeter was another stick whose decorations were similar to those of the first stick. "This is me," he said. He picked it up and turned it slowly as he showed it to me. "The things that are tied to this stick are personal things," he went on. "Here is a little piece of sweetgrass from my medicine bundle." He touched the piece of ceremonial costume and said, "I call my costume's shirt a 'war shirt', but only because I wear it to war against things that are negative and not good. I did not fight in any wars with enemies or with any person, and I never wanted to. There is also a lock of my hair," he added, and then smiled as he rubbed the top of his greyed head. "The lock of hair is black. You can see that I put it in there many years ago." ...

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.68–70

Mails goes on to describe how Fools Crow uses the stick for thought transference:

He needed no prompting to move on, and got down on his knees at the west point of the circle. He picked up a golden eagle tail feather that was lying in front of him. "To transfer my thoughts to the other person,

who is that stick in the middle of the circle, I first smoke the circle and myself with sweetgrass to purify us and get us ready. Beginning at the south where life and rebirth begin, I place the stick that is me at each of the directions. Next, I close my eyes and relax myself by deep breathing. At each place as I move my stick clockwise around the circle I also close my eyes and concentrate upon the thoughts I want to send to the person. As I do this, I wave the feather toward him four times to push the thought in his direction. When I am finished with the thoughts, the last thing I do is lay the feather down pointing toward the quester. Then I move my stick over the feather and up to him. When I get to where I am touching him, I make my ‘whoo-whoo’ sound to push my thoughts into him. He will hear me, and he will do what my thoughts tell him.

“At each of the directions, my thoughts are connected to the Person who lives there. I use the powers He sends me to shape the thoughts I am sending to a person. Sometimes, though, to have a little fun, I will tell the person to do some strange thing – like with the stick crosses. To do this, I must also tie something to represent what I want him to do to his stick. You see the little wooden cross there. The person always does what he is told, and then wonders why he did it. When he comes back from his quest, he will tell me about it and be very puzzled.”

“Do you always use the two sticks for thought transference?” I asked.

“No. *Wakan-Tanka* can do it through me simply by my thinking about it, but using the sticks is the best and most effective way. As you see I am doing it today.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.70–71

Fools Crow goes on to describe the similar techniques he uses to see what the vision quester is seeing. Mails then asks whether distance is an obstacle:

“Can it be done by people who are a long way apart, say one person in South Dakota and the other person in Los Angeles?”

He nodded and answered, “Even from England to South Dakota and back. Since I don’t write letters, when I travel, I take my sticks with me, and I sometimes send messages home by thought transference.” He started to chuckle then, and added, “No stamps and no telephone lines needed. Saves lots of money. Maybe we could sell this idea to the people, and all we would need then is someone to deliver packages!”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.73

When Mails asks about the advantages gained by using the sticks, Fools Crow replies:

“What advantage,” I asked, “does using the sticks have over regular thought transference that is done only with the mind?”

“It is always the same where the concentration tools are concerned. Making them, purifying them with smoke, and setting them up and using them, all take time, and during this time you sink deeper and deeper into communion with *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers. This gives them the time they need to work in and through you, and they can accomplish more. It is the same thing as when we make our ceremonial costumes and paint our bodies. All of this takes time, but it is a way of going more intensely into the experience. We feel it more and we think about it more. By the time we do our ceremony, our daily life and any distractions have been put aside, and we are ready to receive the power and set it in motion. Naturally, the end result is far greater than it would be if we did not do these things.” . . .

“What do you do with the sticks after you have finished with them?”

“I tie the sticks as thank offerings to trees and bushes here on the sacred mountain. I keep the rest of the things to use next time.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM p.73

The second concentration tool was the regeneration stick. Of a similar size, this stick was painted and adorned with coloured pieces of cloth, representing the spirits of the four directions, “plus blue for *Wakan-Tanka* and *Tunkashila*, and green for Grandmother Earth”. Fools Crow used the stick as part of a scaled-down version of the sun dance. He sings, invoking the spirits of the four directions, seeking their help and guidance and thanking them for the blessings in his life. Having demonstrated the technique, he turns to Mails, saying, “Now you do it”:

He had noticed my weariness just as I had observed his. Instead of waiting for a reply, he went to a nearby tree and snapped off a thin branch. Using his pocketknife, he pared this to a length of about six inches and brought it back. He sat down beside me and said, “Give me some things of yours to tie to the stick.”

Not being prepared and not having with me anything that was small and could be easily attached to the stick, I wondered what I might use.

“Handkerchief and a key,” he said as he held out his hand to receive them. He was beaming and felt very good. I could feel the energy and enthusiasm radiating out from him.

“What else?” I asked.

“Shoelace!”

I gave him one.

“Comb,” he said and chuckled. He knew that, being bald, I probably didn’t carry one, and he was right.

I shrugged my shoulders and held out empty hands.

“You have paper,” he said after he had stopped laughing. “Write a prayer to the higher powers on a little piece and fold it up.” I did this, and handed the paper to him.

“That’s enough,” he said, and then rummaged around in his medicine bundle. He came out with a small piece of braided sweetgrass, a few turquoise-coloured beads, a patch of red felt, two white breath feathers, and some yarn. He deftly tied all of these to the stick, and added the items I had given him. “When you do this at home,” he said, “add carefully chosen items to the stick – things that mean something important to you.”

I did the renewal meditation then, following as closely as I could what he had done, except that my prayers were in English and not sung. Afterwards I felt absolutely superb and fully regenerated. It was as if the weight of the previous days had never existed. It had rolled away and my creative thoughts were racing ahead.

“Whenever you have used any of the ritual tools you must afterwards deny yourself something worthwhile for a period of four days,” the holy man said as he returned his paraphernalia to his medicine bundle and swept away with his hands all traces of what he had done on the ground. “This is how you tell the higher powers that you really appreciate what they have done for you. They will send extra blessings to you for this.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.81–82

Moving on to the third focusing tool, Mails continues:

Two of the magical focusing tools have been described now, and only the third remains. While I haven’t mentioned this item until this chapter, after Fools Crow let me see it the first time at Bear Butte, and also when he did his sun dance meditation, he didn’t hide it any more, and I saw it a number of times as he did his private rituals. It was his sacred self-offering stick, a resplendent item that he kept in his medicine bundle in a special red cloth wrapping. He unwrapped it and laid it out alongside his other focusing tools while he did rituals, and he also put it down beside him when he went out to pray. He did not use it in the purification lodge, or at a sun dance or *yuwipi*. He did not, in fact, ever use it when someone else was sharing in a ritual – all of which leads me to believe that the stick must have been a very personal thing to be used when he was alone. (His wife) Kate and Fannie (who had died) before her were the only exceptions to this rule, and myself of course, so that I could see it and after his death pass along its description and the way he used it.

The first time he presented it to me, he held it with the greatest care, and I could see in his misting eyes and soft smile how much he cherished and respected it. If he did actually pass on his medicine bundle to anyone, I am certain that this beloved item was removed before the transfer was made, and then hidden away where no one could find it.

He handed me the stick and as I inspected it I could smell the smoked sweet tobacco and sweetgrass that impregnated it. "I made this many years ago," he said, "in 1928, just after our two sons died. Fannie and I lost four out of five children to sudden sicknesses. I tried, but there was nothing I could do for any of them. But I wanted *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers to know that I did not blame them for the deaths, and that I would continue to serve them. It is made up of things that represent me and my thoughts, along with my love and devotion to the higher powers. It also expressed my continuing gratitude for what the higher powers have done in and through me for others. I call it my 'sacred self-offering stick,' and Stirrup (his primary teacher), who had one of his own, taught me how to make and use it. He told me that in former times every medicine person had one. I was only a boy when he taught me, but he said I would know when the right time had come to make it."

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.82–83

Mails goes on to describe the stick:

In appearance alone the stick was a fabulous creation, and the thought of its not being with him in his grave troubles me greatly. Its base was a ten-inch-long and one-inch-in-diameter cottonwood stick. It was hand carved and painted red. At its top end, which was rounded off slightly, he had painted on the front side three black dots to represent his own face. On the back side, extending from top to bottom, was a narrow, undulating black line. The stick was wrapped in a piece of red felt in such a way that the face was left exposed. Originally, he told me, he had used red cloth, but when that wore out he replaced it with the felt, which was quite new.

On the outside of the stick, about where belt level would be on a person, he had wrapped and tied four strings of thick yarn in the four directional colours – white, black, red and yellow. To this belt were tied two pouches, one containing tobacco and herbs, and the other sage and sweetgrass. Hung from the belt on string loops were two beautiful seashells, some beads of different colours, and a white breath feather. Above the belt, a string of seven tobacco packets was wound around the stick.

Since it would have been difficult to do so, Fools Crow did not unwrap the belt and felt, but he told me what was underneath them. Tied upright to the stick were two long and dyed feathers – one blue and one red. The tips of these extended above the felt wrapping, and so could be seen. Also, there was a piece of the beaded turtle pouch that had once held a portion of his navel cord. There was a small fragment of cloth from the clothing of each of his deceased children, a scrap from the clothing of his surviving daughter, and a fragment from the clothing of each of his two wives. There was a bit of his first ceremonial costume – the one he was given when he was first made ceremonial chief of the Teton Sioux. The bits of clothing were kept in a small, woven pouch, together with four small rocks whose colours and shapes were different. Tucked under a string tie was some of the aging sage he had worn when he was sun-dancer intercessor for the first time.

As previously indicated, the way all of this was assembled was simply stunning, and my illustrations will confirm this. The closest thing to it is the traditional spirit-keeping stick. . . . Fools Crow told me that he refurbished the self-offering stick from time to time to keep it up to date and beautiful – so that it would please the higher powers. He added items that represented significant moments in his life, and he regularly replaced the tobacco offerings.

The stick was a very personal item, and I was not certain that he wanted to tell me anything more about it, but he did.

“I am fully wrapped up in this stick,” he said as he caressed it lovingly. “It is my way of continually telling *Wakan-Tanka*, and the helpers, and Grandmother Earth how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve them. Being one of their hollow bones (pure channels) means more to me than anything else in life. When I am busy with daily tasks, or when I need to go someplace, the stick continues to tell them how I feel. Wherever I am, I know the stick is doing this for me, and that my thanksgiving is not being neglected. Because of this, I love and respect the stick. Where I am, it is always in the back of my mind. You must tell people to make their own sacred self-offering sticks and to put them out as I do. It will give them a feeling of closeness to *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers that nothing else can equal.”

Impressed as I was, I had one more question. “What is the purpose of the undulating black line on the back of the stick?”

“My prayers fly up it on their way to the higher powers, and then their responses come flying back down it to me.” Then he lifted up the felt wrapping where it covered the bottom of the line and added, “See, there is a little painted cup there to catch the blessings I know the higher powers will send me.”

In other conversations, Fools Crow indicates that the use of such “concentration tools” is entirely personal and everyone will tend to use them differently. This is a principle regarding all methods of healing:

The fact that I am a little hollow bone does not mean that I have no importance where *Wakan-Tanka* and the helpers are concerned. On the contrary, they give me every opportunity to use my natural talents and abilities. This is true for everyone who serves them. Twenty medicine men will treat a person in twenty slightly different ways, and this is one of the fascinating things about curing and healing. We all respond differently to *Wakan-Tanka*, and do what we do the way each of us hears and feels His guidance. I am telling you this for the book so you can tell others. In their personal relationships with the higher powers, people out there will use the concentration tools a little differently than I do. The first time they might try to copy me exactly, and maybe the next time. But then they will reshape what they do until it is entirely their own in communion with the higher powers. When the desired results are reached, they should not ask how it happened or whether it was done like I would do it. They should just accept it and be glad.

Frank Fools Crow, in Fools Crow, FCWM pp.63–64

Fools Crow also explains why the different tribal nations use similar methods and hold similar beliefs:

When I asked him why similarities exist between tribes, his answer was a firm, “All of us are taught by the same God, so we should expect to find the same teachings and practices everywhere. The only differences would be determined by where people have lived and what means were available to them. Long before writing came to us, we learned by observing the seasons and nature, by experiencing and studying with the elders, and by listening to the higher ones. In the beginning they taught our ancestors things that were to be passed down from generation to generation. Only rarely do we hear the actual voice of *Wakan-Tanka* and his helpers, although I do when I spirit travel, and I have heard His voice twice in visions. Mostly, I receive their directions and advice through meditating with concentration tools, and through signs or things other people say to me. Once I pray and use my self-offering stick, I know that the answer is on its way to me, and I am constantly looking for it as I go about my daily tasks or perform a ritual.”

Thomas Mails, Fools Crow, FCWM pp.7–8

It is clear that Frank Fools Crow was a remarkable human being as well as a gifted holy man and healer, his mind deeply steeped in his own cultural

images and traditions. It is also certain that an authentic Native American mindset is very different in character from a twentieth- or twenty-first-century mindset. So while a sceptical mind may seek to discount such events and experiences, a more open perspective may be to consider that the mind has hidden dimensions of which few human beings are aware. Mystics and the mystically minded of all probably traditions have expressed the view that even the seemingly real and solid material world is in fact only a projection of the mind.

See also: **thought transference (Native North American)** (8.1).

1. Thomas Mails, *Secret Native American Pathways, SNPM* pp.201–3.

consideration A term sometimes used in translation where the context suggests that ‘meditation’, as spiritual practice, would make better sense. See **meditation**.

contemplation (Gk. *theōria*, L. *contemplatio*) The state of inner silence and stillness in which the mind and soul are focused on the Divine; the silent awareness of God in the core of one’s being, that one’s essential being is in God; absorption in the darkness of one’s inner being or the divine light within; exercise of the inner spiritual vision of the soul and higher mind; contemplation of God; the means by which the soul and higher mind acquire direct spiritual knowledge or *gnōsis*.

In Christianity, contemplation is used as a general term for all stages of the inner life of prayer, but especially for the culminating stages of spiritual practice that result from interior or mental prayer and meditation. Meditation (when understood as reflection upon some biblical passage, or upon the life of Jesus, or upon some other spiritual matter), together with the preliminary and discursive forms of prayer, lead the aspirant to the gate of Truth; contemplation enables him to enter within. According to a maxim commonly repeated among Catholic contemplatives, which alludes to a saying of Jesus:¹

Seek in reading, and you shall find in meditation; knock in prayer and it shall be opened to you in contemplation.

John of the Cross, Points of Love 64; cf. CWJC3 p.233

Contemplation is used to include the visualization of Christ with the eye of imagination, as well as contemplation upon the inner essence of things, from which the created things of this world originate. In the Orthodox Church, contemplation is also used specifically for advanced stages of the prayer of Jesus.

Contemplation is also called contemplative prayer or the contemplative life, and is contrasted with the active life (Gk. *praktikē, praxis*), which is the practice of good works and the pursuit of perfection in human virtue. A number of Catholic mystics have differentiated between ‘acquired’ and ‘infused’ contemplation, though the demarcation between the two is a matter of degree. The former refers to contemplative, non-discursive prayer, achieved with divine grace by individual effort at spiritual exercises. The latter is understood as a spontaneous infusion of divine love and grace:

Contemplation is naught else than a secret, peaceful and loving infusion from God, which, if it be permitted, enkindles the soul with the spirit of love. . . . Herein God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in perfection of love, without its doing anything, or understanding of what manner is this infused contemplation.

John of the Cross, Dark Night 1:10.6, 2:5.1, CWJC1 pp.358–59, 381

Acquired contemplation is also known as active, imperfect or natural contemplation. Infused contemplation is also described as passive, perfect, supernatural or super-eminent contemplation; and to it belong the experience of raptures, ecstasies, suspension of the senses and intellect, and so on.

Advanced stages of the inner life, such as the prayer of quiet and the prayer of union, have been identified as stages of contemplation. Various mystical writers, not always in agreement with each other, have also described the stages of the inner life as ascending degrees of contemplation. Some of the mystical writers of the Orthodox Church speak of a hierarchy of eight contemplative stages ranging from “contemplation of the formless, unoriginate and uncreated God, source of all things”, through “contemplation of the hierarchy and order of the spiritual powers”, to “contemplation of the structure of created beings”, followed by “contemplation of God’s descent through the incarnation of the *Logos*”.² After these four come further stages in which the mysteries of the Christian faith are contemplated. Others have said that the soul proceeds through contemplation of the inner essences (*logoi*), principles, foundations, or archetypes of created things to contemplation of the *Logos* itself:

We practise the virtues in order to achieve contemplation of the inner essences (*logoi*) of created things, and from this we pass to contemplation of the *Logos* who gives them their being; and he manifests himself when we are in the state of prayer.

Evagrius the Solitary, On Prayer 52, Philokalia, PCT1 pp.61–62

The unknown Syrian monk (c.500) who wrote pseudo-epigraphically as Dionysius the Areopagite, and whose writings influenced centuries of

Christian mysticism, describes contemplation as a state in which the bodily senses and the thinking mind are in abeyance:

In the earnest exercise of mystic contemplation (*mystika theamata*), leave behind the senses and the activities of the intellect, and all things that the senses or the intellect can perceive, and all being and nonbeing. And strive upwards in unknowing, insofar as you are able, towards union with Him who is above all things and all knowledge. For, by unceasing and absolute withdrawal from yourself and all things, abandoning all restraint in pure and absolute ecstasy (*ekstasis*), and being set free from all, you will be borne upwards to the radiance of the divine darkness (*theiou skotous aktis*) that lies beyond all existence.

Pseudo-Dionysius, Mystical Theology 1; cf. in CU p.25, DNMT pp.191–92, JTPM p.239, OCM p.175, WDA1 p.130

The anonymous author of the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing* maintains that the deepest level of contemplation that the soul can know while still in the body is for one's own being to rest completely in the depths of inner darkness and unknowing, and to "beat upon" the "cloud and the darkness".³ But there are many stages on the inner journey and it is difficult to know exactly what an individual writer and mystic may be referring to. In this instance, the "radiance of the divine darkness that lies beyond all existence" of Dionysius seems to be a description of God Himself and is thus a higher stage than the "darkness" and "cloud of unknowing" described by the author of the *Cloud of Unknowing*. Either way, all such inner states are attained in contemplation:

The higher degree of contemplation – such as we may know it here – dwells entirely in this darkness and in this cloud of unknowing, with a loving desire and a blind awareness of the naked being of God Himself alone.

Cloud of Unknowing 8; cf. CU p.50, CUEU pp.86–87

Such inwardness, as he and many others have asserted, is not a matter of study or learning but of divine grace: "This work is never got by study, but only by grace."⁴ Even so, the experience is not the same for everyone. The same writer points to the different spiritual capacity of individuals to experience this divine 'ravishing':

There are some who think this matter to be so difficult and so fearful that no one may come to it without great effort, and then only to relish it in moments of ravishing. Let me answer these folk as best I can. It is all by the will and good pleasure of God, according to a person's

natural spiritual capacity, that this grace of contemplation and activity of the spirit is given. There are some who cannot reach it without long and arduous spiritual practice; and even then only once in a while do they experience the special call of our Lord and know perfection in this work – such a call being known as ‘ravishing’.

Yet there are others who are so attuned in grace and in spirit, and so at home with God in this grace of contemplation, that they enjoy it as they wish, amidst their daily routine, whether sitting, standing, walking, or kneeling. And at the same time, they have full use of all their faculties, bodily or spiritual, and may use them if they wish, perhaps not without some difficulty, yet without great difficulty.

Cloud of Unknowing 71; cf. *CU* pp.127–28, *CUCW* p.146, *CUEU* pp.257–58

In a similar vein, Jerónimo Nadal seems to be following Dionysius when he writes:

The fruits of contemplation are very sweet, coming as they do from a kind of unknowing of all things and from a darkness from which streams the brightest of lights. For what knowledge is higher than that wherein neither sense nor understanding can explain anything and the soul is raised above itself and above all that comes within its natural reach by the gift of divine enlightenment?

Jerónimo Nadal, JNOD p.248, in *SSM3* p.190

Contemplation of the divine or spiritual light within is a common theme among mystical writers. Thus, St Augustine speaks of having

arrived at the sight of God and reached . . . bliss in the contemplation of immaterial light through participation in His changeless immortality, which we long to attain, with burning desire.

St Augustine, City of God 12:21, *CGAP* p.498

Maximos the Confessor maintains that the perception of spiritual light is essential for spiritual contemplation:

Just as it is impossible for the eye to perceive sensible objects without the light of the sun, so the human mind (*nous*) cannot engage in spiritual contemplation (*theōria pneumatikē*) without the light of the spirit. For physical light naturally illuminates the senses so that they may perceive physical bodies; while spiritual light illumines the mind (*nous*) so that it can engage in contemplation (*theōria*) and thus grasp what lies beyond the senses.

Maximos the Confessor, On Theology 4:17, *Philokalia*; cf. *PCT2* p.239

The mystic then perceives things that are beyond expression in human terms:

The ascetic in spiritual contemplation beholds things which for the overwhelming majority of people are a mystery, but afterwards he is faced with the impossibility of communicating this mystery – translated into mortal language, it is construed quite differently by him who hears it.

Archimandrite Sophrony, Monk of Mount Athos, MMA p.115

Such contemplation, says Walter Hilton, is a wonderfully comforting experience, far surpassing all other pleasures:

This worshipful contemplation of love of God fills the soul with wonderful comfort and upholds it so strongly and tenderly that it cannot find true pleasure and satisfaction in any earthly joys, and has no desire to do so.

Walter Hilton, Ladder of Perfection 2:37, LPH p.214

Everything of the physical senses seems of little significance compared to contemplation of the divine “Good”:

The contemplation (*theōria*) of our true Good makes us despise all these things; and so the eye of the body sleeps. Anything revealed by the eye does not attract the perfect soul, because its spiritual part (*nous*) looks only to those things that transcend the visible universe.... When all of these (the senses) have been lulled into inactivity by a kind of sleep, the heart’s functioning becomes pure, and the spirit (*nous*) looks up to heaven, unshaken and unperturbed by the motion of the senses.... Thus the soul, enjoying alone the contemplation (*theōria*) of Being, will not awake for anything that arouses sensual pleasure. After lulling to sleep every bodily motion, it receives the vision of God in a divine wakefulness with pure and naked intuition. May we make ourselves worthy of this vision, achieving by this sleep the awakening of the soul!

Gregory of Nyssa, On Canticles 10, PG44 cols.993a ff.; cf. GGG pp.40–41, 242

See also: **awareness** (8.1), **contemplative life** (►4), **meditation**, **prayer**, **recollection**, **theōria**.

1. *Matthew* 7:7–8.
2. Gregory of Sinai, *On Stillness and Prayer* 130, *Philokalia*, PCT4 p.248.
3. *Cloud of Unknowing* 7; cf. *CU* p.48, *CUCW* p.69, *CUEU* p.82.
4. *Cloud of Unknowing* 39; cf. *CU* p.87, *CUCW* p.107.

contemplative prayer See **contemplation**.

cún (C) *Lit.* to be, to exist, to be present; used in Daoism in its causative sense of ‘to make present’ or ‘to cause to exist’, conveying the meaning of something being given an apparent existence through visualization. In this form of Daoist meditation – popularized by the *Tàipíng*, *Tàiqīng*, and *Shàngqīng* schools (C3rd CE onwards) – the meditator, through concentration and focused attention, causes specific objects to appear before his mind’s eye (deities, scriptures, constellations, colours, *etc.*) or causes specific energies to manifest in particular bodily locations.

Three forms of *cún* are mentioned in Daoist texts: *cúnxiǎng* (visualization and imagination of the spirit within the body); *cúnshén* (visualization of the spirit itself); and *cúnsī* (visualization and meditation), which refers to visualization of and meditation on inner deities.¹ The underlying purpose of all three is the same: through concentrated visualization of the spirit within, to gain inner purity and tranquillity and thus awareness of the *Dào*, while at the same time achieving physical longevity and spiritual immortality.

Cúnxiǎng involves full intentional concentration of the mind on visualizing the spirit within the body. The practitioner creates a mental image of the body and visualizes the spirit that dwells therein. In this context, visualization (*xiǎng*) refers to the deliberate creation of an image, as opposed to undisciplined drifting fantasy. According to master Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn (C8th CE):

Contemplation (*cún*) is to contemplate (*cún*) one’s spirit (*shén*). Visualization (*xiǎng*) is to visualize (*xiǎng*) one’s body (*shēn*). (How is this accomplished?) Close your eyes, and your true vision will be revealed. Collect the mind (*shōuxīn*), and your true mind will be realized. When mind and vision remain within and never go out, then the (true spiritual) body is attained, and the spirit is not harmed. This is the gradually accumulated result of contemplative visualization (*cúnxiǎng*).

Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, Tiānyīnzǐ 6, DZ1026 1:40a, JY158

He goes on to say that combining the activities of *cún* and *xiǎng* results in “tranquillity” through which the adept can “recover (spiritual) life (*fùmìng*)”. This, he says, is half the spiritual journey.²

When master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE) asked his inner spiritual master Zhōnglí Quán (c.C3rd BCE) about the practice of *cúnxiǎng*, Zhōnglí Quán is said to have replied that the purpose is to steady the otherwise incessantly active mind:

The method of *cúnxiǎng* during inner contemplation (*nèiguān*) and sitting and forgetting (*zuòwàng*) has been used by some sages of the past and present, but not by others. Considering that the mind, having

no place to rest, jumps around like a monkey, with thoughts racing by like a horse, and being fearful of losing determination through (being distracted by) things, the method of producing an image in the nothingness is to keep one's ears from listening, keep one's eyes from looking, keep one's mind under control, and keep one's thoughts calm. Visualizing (*cúnxiǎng*) something during inner contemplation (*nèiguān*) and sitting and forgetting (*zuòwàng*) is therefore absolutely necessary.

Zhōng-Lǚ chuándào jí, in Xiūzhēn shíshū, DZ263

Cúnshén is essentially the same as *cúnxiǎng*; it links concentrated attention on the spirit to an increase in energy, leading to physical longevity and spiritual immortality.

Cúnshén is the specific subject of two texts in the Daoist Canon: the seventh-century *Cúnshén liànzì míng* ('Inscription on the Visualization of Spirit and Refinement of *Qì*');³ and *Cúnshén gùqì lùn* ('Essay on the Visualization of Spirit and the Stabilization of *Qì*'),⁴ probably written sometime during the tenth to fourteenth centuries. In the former, master Sūn Sīmǎo (C7th) describes the mystical ascent as comprising five stages of the mind (from agitation to tranquillity) and seven stages of the body (from bodily existence to emptiness). In the latter, the adept refines the body (represented by *jīng*, vital essence) into *qì* (subtle life energy), and refines *qì* into *shén* (spirit), finally merging the spirit into *xū* – the Void, which is the *Dào*. Both texts emphasize the beneficial calming effect of *cún* (visualization) on the mind – a tranquil mind being essential for physical longevity and spiritual immortality.

The form of visualization known as *cúnsī* is the theme of the lengthy fourth-century *Tàishàng Lǎojūn dà cúnsī túzhù jué* ('Illustrated Commentary and Instructions on the Great Visualization and Meditation, by the Most High Lord Lǎo').⁵ In this method, *cún* refers to the internally visualized images of deities, which should be imagined as clearly as if they possessed material reality. The text presents many examples of such visualizations, practised during ordination, in heavenly audience with the gods, during advanced celestial interaction, and in daily activities. The purpose of visualizing inner deities is to 'maintain' them in their proper locations, to nourish them with one's *qì*, and to invoke their protection and sustenance.

See also: **dìng** (8.1), **guān**.

1. See "cun," *Encyclopedia of Taoism, ET1* pp.287–89 (the source of much in this entry).
2. Sīmǎ Chéngzhēn, *Tiānyǐnzǐ* 6, *DZ1026* 1:40a, *JY158*, *TEAK* p.84.
3. Sūn Sīmǎo, *Cúnshén liànzì míng*, *DZ834*.
4. *Cúnshén gùqì lùn*, *DZ577*.
5. *Tàishàng Lǎojūn dà cúnsī túzhù jué*, *DZ875*.

dahanī dhāraṇā (S/H) *Lit.* fiery (*dahanī*) concentration (*dhāraṇā*); also called *āgneyī* (fire) *dhāraṇā*;¹ one of five forms of *dhāraṇā* (concentration) practised by yogis to gain control over the five *chakras* below the eye centre and their associated *tattvas* of earth, water, fire, air, and *ākāsha*. In *dahanī dhāraṇā*, concentration is held at the navel *chakra*, the centre associated with the fire *tattva*. See **haṭha yoga**.

1. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 3:69, 75.

daimoku (J) *Lit.* title (of a book), heading; in the *Nichiren* school of Japanese Buddhism, a name for the *Lotus Sūtra* (J. *Myōhō renge kyō*); by extension, a name for the chant, “*Namu myōhō renge kyō* (Praise to the *Sūtra of the Lotus Blossom of the Wondrous Dharma*);” a chant or *mantra* recited by devotees of the many *Nichiren* schools of Japanese Buddhism as their primary practice, with some differences in pronunciation between the various schools – *namu*, for instance, is sometimes pronounced as *nam*; also called *shudai* (title). The full Sanskrit title of the *Lotus Sūtra* is *Saddharma-puṇḍarīka Sūtra* (‘*Lotus Sūtra of the True Dharma*’), of which the Japanese *Myōhō renge kyō* is a translation.

The Buddhist reformer, Nichiren Daishōnin (1222–1282), founder of the *Nichiren* school, taught exclusive devotion to the *Lotus Sūtra*, believing it to contain the essence of the entire teachings of the Buddha regarding transmigration, the laws of *karma*, and the means of attaining liberation and enlightenment. Daily chanting of the *daimoku* and recitation of passages from the *Lotus Sūtra* figure prominently in the ceremonies of all *Nichiren* schools, and comprise the primary religious practice of both monks and laity. Although the various *Nichiren* schools have their own interpretations of their founder’s teachings, they are all agreed in recitation of the same *mantra*.

Following the teachings of Nichiren, it is believed that in this present age, during which the *Dharma* is understood to be in decline, simply chanting the *mantra* brings forth the individual’s potential for buddhahood, leading to the attainment of liberation and enlightenment, as well as bringing about positive changes in the world. The chant is understood to embody the essence of the Buddha’s teachings. All the virtues and qualities of the eternal Buddha are understood to be enshrined in the *mantra*, and are believed to be acquired by those who chant the *daimoku* with faith.

Nichiren himself believed that the *daimoku*, as the title of the *Lotus Sūtra* contained the entire *sūtra* within it:

The spirit within one’s body of five or six feet may appear in just one’s face, which is only a foot long, and the spirit within one’s face may appear in just one’s eyes, which are only an inch across. Included within the two characters representing Japan is all that is within the

country's sixty-six provinces: the people and the animals, the rice paddies and the other fields, those of high and low status, the nobles and the commoners, and the seven kinds of treasures and all the other precious gems. Similarly, included within the title, or *daimoku*, of *Nam myōhō renge kyō* is the entire *sūtra* consisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters, and 69,384 characters, without the omission of a single character. . . .

Everything has its essential point, and the heart of the *Lotus Sūtra* is its title, or the *daimoku*, of *Nam myōhō renge kyō*. Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire *Lotus Sūtra*. Chanting *daimoku* twice is the same as reading the entire *sūtra* twice, one hundred *daimoku* equal one hundred readings of the *sūtra*, and one thousand *daimoku*, one thousand readings of the *sūtra*. Thus, if you ceaselessly chant *daimoku*, you will be continually reading the *Lotus Sūtra*.

Nichiren Daishōnin, The One Essential Phrase (121), WND1 pp.922–23

Names, he maintains, have an intrinsic power to invoke the thing that is named, and all that it stands for. In the case of the *Lotus Sūtra*, it has the power to invoke the buddhahood or “*buddha-nature*” that is within every sentient being:

If one uses the term ‘birds’, people know that one is talking about creatures that fly in the sky; if one says ‘beasts’, people understand that one is referring to animals that run over the ground. In all things, names are of great importance precisely because they can convey general meanings in this way. This is what the great teacher Tīāntái (Zhìyì) meant when he said that names convey the basic nature of a thing while phrases describe how it differs from other things, or when he said that names designate the fundamental character of a thing.

In addition, names have the virtue of being able to summon the things to which they refer, and things as a matter of function respond to the name that refers to them. In similar fashion, the name or *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* has the power (to summon the *buddha-nature* to which it refers).

Nichiren Daishōnin, Between a Sage and an Unenlightened Man 1 (13), WND1 p.132

Even a “single character” of the *Lotus Sūtra* is like a microcosm of the whole. But this is not so, he adds, of other *sūtras*:

First of all, when it comes to the *Lotus Sūtra*, you should understand that, whether one recites all eight volumes, or only one volume, one chapter, one verse, one phrase, or simply the *daimoku* or title, the blessings are the same. It is like the water of the great ocean, a single drop of which contains water from all the countless streams and rivers,

or like the wish-granting jewel, which, though only a single jewel, can shower all kinds of treasures upon the wisher. And the same is true of a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, or a million such drops of water or such jewels. A single character of the *Lotus Sūtra* is like such a drop of water or such a jewel, and the hundred million characters (actually, 69,384) are like a hundred million such drops or jewels.

On the other hand, a single character of the other *sūtras*, or the name of any of the various *buddhas*, is like one drop of the water of a particular stream or river, or like only one stone from a particular mountain or a particular sea. One such drop does not contain the water of countless other streams and rivers, and one such stone does not possess the virtues that inhere in innumerable other kinds of stones.

Therefore, when it comes to the *Lotus Sūtra*, it is praiseworthy to recite any chapter you have placed your trust in, whichever chapter that may be.

Nichiren Daishōnin, 'Expedient Means' and 'Life Span' Chapters (9), WND1 p.69

Repetition of a particular name or phrase in the hope of thereby attaining liberation and enlightenment was not Nichiren's innovation. Invocation of the name of the celestial *buddha* Amida (S. Amitābha) was prevalent in his time. The *mantra* was known as the *nembutsu*, and ran: "*Namu Amida Butsu* (Homage to the Buddha of Infinite Light)." By constant repetition and remembrance of the name of Amida Butsu, the practitioner hoped to be reborn in the western paradise (pure land) of Amida, where enlightenment could easily be attained, and the sufferings of rebirth avoided. This simple practice could be performed by all, regardless of their intellectual attainments or depth of knowledge concerning Buddhist doctrine. Nichiren, however, rejected the popular *nembutsu*, promoting the *daimoku* in its stead. In his letters, he makes his preference very clear, also indicating the initial hostility with which his teachings were received:

Among the ten directions, all the people in Japan aspire to the west (*i.e.* to take birth in Amida Buddha's western pure land). Among all *buddhas*, they revere Amida Buddha, and among all practices, they invoke Amida's name. Some make these three concerns their basis, yet engage in other practices, while others devote themselves to the *nembutsu* alone. In the more than twenty years since the fifth year of the Kenchō era (1253) up until the present, I have first clarified the Buddha's lifetime teachings in terms of their relative merit, sequence of preaching and profundity, and upon that basis I have asserted the superiority of the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* over the invocation of the name of Amida Buddha.

Yet no one, from the ruler on down to the common people, has heeded my words. They have questioned their teachers about me,

appealed to their lords, talked with their companions, and spoken to their wives, children and retainers, so that rumours concerning me have spread to every province, district, village and hamlet, as well as to their temples and shrines. As a result, everyone has come to know my name, and they all say that, if one compares the *Lotus Sūtra* with the *nembutsu*, the *nembutsu* is superior and the *Lotus Sūtra* is no match for it; and that other priests are worthy of respect, while I am contemptible.

So, the ruler regards me with hostility, the people have come to hate me, and all Japan has become a great foe of both the *Lotus Sūtra* and its votary. . . . I am saying all this, however, for the benefit of those men and women who believe in the principles of Buddhism, and I will leave it to them to judge for themselves.

*Nichiren Daishōnin, Outline of the 'Entrustment'
and Other Chapters (119), WND1 p.914*

Even so, he still retains hope for a positive outcome of his cause:

The invocation of Amida Buddha's name has exerted influence where the *Lotus Sūtra* has not spread. But once the invocation of *Nam myōhō renge kyō* has been raised, the *nembutsu* will become like a dog cowering before a lion, or the light of the stars paling before the sun. The *daimoku* and the *nembutsu* are as unlike as a hawk and a pheasant. That is why the four kinds of Buddhists all view me with jealousy, and why everyone, both high and low, feels hatred for me. Those who make groundless accusations against me fill the country, and the wicked abound in the land. Therefore, people choose what is inferior and detest what is superior. It is as though one were to assert that a dog is braver than a lion, or that the stars appear brighter than the sun.

Nichiren Daishōnin, One-eyed Turtle and the Floating Log (130), WND1 p.959

The *Lotus Sūtra* is actually a collection of *sūtras*, of which the originals were probably written in a Prakrit vernacular, later translated into Sanskrit to endow them with respectability. The *sūtra* was translated from the Prakrit or Sanskrit into Chinese, first in 286 CE by Dharmaraksha and again in 406 CE by Kumārajīva, who is reckoned to have relied heavily on the earlier translation. Various other translations are said to have been made, but it is generally Kumārajīva's that is most highly regarded and most commonly used. Some Chinese and Japanese texts contain two further *sūtras*, written in Chinese and appended to the original as prologue and epilogue. The oldest *sūtras* were probably written between 100 BCE and 100 CE, and the majority had been written by 200 CE.

A *Mahāyāna* text, the *Lotus Sūtra* declares itself to have been a discourse delivered by the Buddha in the latter years of his life. According to tradition, it was subsequently safeguarded for five hundred years by the celestial *nāgas*

(serpent deities) until the world was ready to receive it. In the Buddha's time, so the *Lotus Sūtra* declares, humanity was unable to understand the higher teaching it reveals. The *sūtra* became enormously popular and has been hugely influential in the development of Buddhist thought and doctrine. It is one of the most highly regarded *sūtras* in the *Mahāyāna* tradition of East Asia, especially among the *Tiāntái* (J. *Tendai*, K. *Cheontae*), *Zen*, and *Nichiren* schools. Among the latter is the well-known lay Buddhist movement known as *Risshō Kōsei Kai* or *Soka Gakkai*.

The symbolism inherent in the title is drawn from the Indian tradition in which the lotus – whose roots are in the mud while its pure white flowers are above the water, in the light – represents the enlightened individual who keeps himself detached from the mud of the world. Principle themes in the *Lotus Sūtra* include:

1. The potential for enlightenment is present with all beings; all beings can become *bodhisattvas* and, ultimately, *buddhas*; all human beings are spiritually equal, women as well as men, regardless of race, occupation or social standing, and all have the potential to attain buddhahood in their present lifetime; deities (*devas*) and other celestial beings also have the potential to attain enlightenment, which includes liberation from the cycle of transmigration. Other *Mahāyāna* teachings maintain that seekers must practise austerities and meditation for many ages (*kalpas*). The *Lotus Sūtra* insists that through its auspices, all can attain enlightenment in their present life.
2. The historical Buddha continues to live on in his celestial *bodhisattvas*, who have taken a vow to remain in this world or higher realms in order to help sentient beings attain enlightenment. Even after his *parinirvāṇa* (entering final *nirvāṇa* at death), the power of the Buddha has remained in the world. The real *buddha*, explains the *Lotus Sūtra*, is a cosmic power that is forever devoted to the salvation of sentient beings. He appears to be born and to die only for the benefit of the beings in whichever world he manifests. In fact, whether visible or not, he is always going about his business of salvation. The Buddha is the eternal father of all sentient beings and is eternally present in the world in order to care for them, to teach them the *Dharma*, and to lead them, ultimately, to enlightenment. *Buddhas* are immortal and can reappear at any time in any realm for the benefit of sentient beings who dwell there. In fact, there are an infinite number of such *buddhas* who exist throughout all time and space.
3. The Buddha only taught one way or vehicle (*ekayāna*). The earlier *Theravāda*, and the later *Mahāyāna* and *Vajrayāna* schools are really only expressions of the same one path. They appear different because the Buddha resorted to skilful or expedient means (S. *upāya-kaushalya*, C. *fāngbiàn*). 'Expedient means' are the various pragmatic means adopted by *buddhas*

and *bodhisattvas* to convey their message to spiritually dull and ignorant human beings, according to the particular circumstances, mentality, personal preferences, *etc.* of their hearers. ‘Expedient means’ is enumerated as the seventh of the ten *pāramitās* (perfections) – the *upāya pāramitā* – to be attained by *bodhisattvas* in the course of their spiritual evolution.

The notion of ‘expedient means’ or ‘skilful means’ is an early *Mahāyāna* innovation, introduced as an explanation or justification of new doctrine. *Mahāyāna* Buddhism maintains that the Buddha tailored his teachings to the people he was addressing, and that the teachings he gave at one time were for that time only, and would be different and not appropriate for the people of other times and cultures. Specific formulations of the teachings are only ‘expedient means’, dependent on the particular context. It is like a medicine that is given to a particular patient for a particular condition, and is not applicable to all sick patients; or it is like the many different gateways to an ancient city – they all lead to the same place.

The concept of ‘expedient means’ is founded upon the *Mahāyāna* understanding that all teachings are relative and do not in themselves contain the absolute Truth. Upon attaining liberation, or even while travelling the Way, it becomes clear that the *Dharma* is only a means to reach that goal, devised and expressed according to the needs of the people, their times, and their way of life.

Nonetheless, the *Lotus Sūtra* is not shy of promoting its own superiority. “I have preached various *sūtras*, and among those *sūtras* the *Lotus* is foremost!” says the Buddha and, “Among the *sūtras*, it holds the highest place.”¹

In the *Lotus Sūtra*, in a section of uninhibited self-promotion, the *dharma-bhāṇaka* (preacher) who discourses from the *Lotus Sūtra* is made the subject of an extensive eulogy.² “If any good man or good woman shall accept and keep this *Scripture of the Dharma Blossom*, whether reading it, reciting it, interpreting it, or copying it,” he or she will be the recipient of great merit, and will attain a multitude of virtues of the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind, thus purifying these six faculties and enhancing them to an extraordinary degree. The *bhāṇaka* will also have the vision of all the heavens and hells, “up to the pinnacle of Existence”, and will come to know everything about all living beings: “He shall thoroughly see and thoroughly know the causes and conditions, the fruits and retributions of the beings’ deeds and places of birth.” With a purified hearing faculty, he will hear, throughout the cosmos,

whatever sounds there may be, inner or outer, in the thousand-millionfold world. Though he may not yet have acquired a divine ear (C. *tiāněr*; S. *divya-shrotra*), with the pure and ordinary ears received at birth from his father and mother, he shall hear and understand everything.

Likewise, the other human faculties of anyone who “accepts and keeps this scripture, whether reading it, reciting it, interpreting it, or copying it” will also be augmented to an extraordinary degree. Among the various enhancements to his exceptionally purified mind, it is asserted that:

Upon hearing no more than a single verse or single phrase (of this *sūtra*), he will master incalculable and boundless principles; and after having understood these principles, he will be able to expound a single phrase or a single verse for as much as a month, or four months, or even for a year; and the *dharma*s (doctrines) that he preaches will conform to the true import of that principle, and will never be contrary to reality.

Lotus Sūtra 19, T9 262:50a; cf. LBFD p.276

Nichiren takes these passages at face value. Referring to the three extant Chinese translations of the *Lotus Sūtra*, he asks a question and answers it himself:

- Q.** What passages of proof can be cited to show that one should chant only the *daimoku*?
- A.** The eighth volume of the *Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Law* states that one who accepts and upholds the mere name of the *Lotus Sūtra* will enjoy immeasurable good fortune. The *Lotus Sūtra of the Correct Law* says that, if one hears this *sūtra* and proclaims and embraces its title, one will enjoy merit beyond measure. And the *Supplemented Lotus Sūtra of the Wonderful Law* says that one who accepts and upholds the name of the *Lotus Sūtra* will enjoy immeasurable good fortune. These statements indicate that the good fortune one receives from simply chanting the *daimoku* is beyond measure.

Nichiren Daishōnin, Daimoku of the Lotus Sūtra (14), WND1 p.143

Nichiren maintains that even occasional repetition of the *daimoku* is sufficient to rescue an individual from rebirth (“regression”); but he adds that recitation with faith is also a prerequisite. It is better to be “dull-witted” and to have faith, than to be a scholar and lack faith:

- Q.** Is it possible, without understanding the meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra*, but merely by chanting the five or seven characters of *Nam myōhō renge kyō* once a day, once a month, or simply once a year, once a decade or once in a lifetime, to avoid being drawn into trivial or serious acts of evil, to escape falling into the four evil paths, and instead to eventually reach the stage of non-regression?
- A.** Yes, it is.

Q. You may talk about fire, but unless you put your hand in a flame, you will never burn yourself. You may say “water, water!”, but unless you actually drink it, you will never satisfy your thirst. Then how, just by chanting the *daimoku* of *Nam myōhō renge kyō* without understanding what it means, can you escape from the evil paths of existence?

A. They say that, if you play a *koto* (13-stringed instrument) strung with a lion’s sinews, then all the other kinds of strings will snap. And if you so much as hear the words ‘pickled plum’, your mouth will begin to water. Even in everyday life there are such wonders, so how much greater are the wonders of the *Lotus Sūtra*!

We are told that parrots, simply by twittering the four noble truths³ of the *Hinayāna* (i.e. *Theravāda*) teachings, were able to be reborn in heaven, and that men, simply by respecting the three treasures, were able to escape being swallowed by a huge fish.⁴ How much more effective, then, is the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra*, which is the very heart of all the eighty thousand sacred teachings of Buddhism and the eye of all the *buddhas*! How can you doubt that by chanting it you can escape from the four evil paths?

The *Lotus Sūtra*, wherein the Buddha honestly discarded expedient means, says that one can “gain entrance through faith alone”.⁵ And the *Nirvāṇa Sūtra*, which the Buddha preached in the grove of *shāla* trees on the last day of his life, states, “Although there are innumerable practices that lead to enlightenment, if one teaches faith, then that includes all those practices.”

Thus faith is the basic requirement for entering the way of the Buddha. In the fifty-two stages of *bodhisattva* practice, the first ten stages, dealing with faith, are basic, and the first of these ten stages is that of arousing pure faith. Though lacking in knowledge of Buddhism, a person of faith, even if dull-witted, is to be reckoned as a person of correct views. But even though one has some knowledge of Buddhism, if one is without faith, then one is to be considered a slanderer and an *ichchhantika*, or person of incorrigible disbelief.

Nichiren Daishōnin, Daimoku of the Lotus Sūtra (14), WND1 pp.141–42

In another place, he reiterates that the *daimoku* provides protection even for those with little understanding:

Even those who lack understanding, so long as they chant *Nam myōhō renge kyō*, can avoid the evil paths. This is like lotus flowers, which turn as the sun does, though the lotus has no mind to direct it, or like the plantain that grows with the rumbling of thunder, though this plant

has no ears to hear it. Now we are like the lotus or the plantain, and the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* is like the sun or the thunder.

People say that, if you tie a piece of living rhinoceros horn to your body and enter the water, the water will not come within five feet of you. They also say that, if one leaf of the sandalwood tree unfurls, it can eradicate the foul odour of the *eraṇḍa* (castor oil) trees for a distance of forty *yojanas*. In this case, our evil *karma* may be likened to the *eraṇḍa* trees or the water, and the *daimoku* of the *Lotus Sūtra* may be likened to the rhinoceros horn or the sandalwood leaf.

Nichiren Daishōnin, Daimoku of the Lotus Sūtra (14), WND1 p.142

See also: **gohonzon** (8.4) **nembutsu**.

1. *Lotus Sūtra* 10, 14, 23, *LSOC* pp.203, 246–47, 327.
2. *Lotus Sūtra* 19, T9 262:47c3–49c21, *LBD* pp.264–76.
3. See *Sūtra on the Wise and the Foolish*.
4. See *Great Compassion Sūtra*.
5. *Lotus Sūtra* 3, T9 262:15b18, *LSOC* p.110.

dakṣhiṇāchāra, dakṣhiṇa-mārga (S), **dām bhāg, dām mārg** (H) *Lit.* right-side (*dakṣhiṇa, dām bhāg*) path (*mārga*); the right-hand path; one of the two tantric paths, requiring great purity of mind; the converse of *vām bhāg* (left side), *vāma-mārga* (left-hand path) or *vāmāchāra* (left-hand practice), which does not insist on mental and moral perfection.

In the Hindu and Buddhist tantric tradition, *dakṣhiṇāchāra* conforms to conventional Hindu practices, such as *yoga*, meditation, asceticism, and the leading of a moral life according to conventional standards. *Vāmāchāra*, on the other hand, includes practices that are contrary to traditional Hinduism, such as animal sacrifice, the consumption of meat, the use of alcohol and other drugs, and rituals that include sexual *yoga*. Tantric followers view both as valid paths to enlightenment, though *vāmāchāra* is regarded as the more dangerous, not suitable for all. The terms are current in modern Hindu and Buddhist *tantra*.

Drawing on tantric origins, western esotericism has also spoken of the right- and left-hand paths, although individual authorities have defined them differently. For some, the left-hand path is associated with black magic; others have seen it as a path that breaks with normal conventions, but is not associated with ‘black’ practices. The English terms seem to have been introduced by the nineteenth-century theosophist Madame Blavatsky in her book *Isis Unveiled* (1877).

A number of mystical traditions have spoken of the right- and left-hand paths. Swami Shiv Dayal Singh speaks of the path to God through the Sound

Current as being on the right side (*dahinī dishā*) after entry through the third eye:

Withdraw your soul,
and see the gate of the *til* (point, *i.e.* third eye):
On the right side (*dahinī dishā*)
is the Sound Current (*Shabd kī Dhār*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 9:4.17, SBP p.90

dānfáng, dānshì, dānwū (C) *Lit.* chamber (*fáng, shì, wū*) of elixir (*dān*); red chamber, chamber of cinnabar; in outer alchemy (*wàidān*), an alchemical workshop, a room where medicines or elixirs are prepared; a term adopted by inner alchemy (*nèidān*) as a metaphor for the ‘workshop’ of the human body, in which the inner experiment of spiritual refinement and transmutation is conducted.

Liú Yīmíng attempts to explain the imagery:

To refine medicine (*liànyào*), you need an elixir chamber (*dānfáng*).
To contain medicine, you need a vessel. Without the elixir chamber (*dānfáng*) and the vessel, there is no place to set up the furnace, no place to contain the medicine. The elixir chamber (*dānfáng*) and vessel are necessary for its refinement.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of using the false to cultivate the true.

The physical human body is like an elixir chamber (*dānfáng*). The five organs (heart, kidneys, lungs, liver, spleen) inside the body are like the vessels. The physical body conceals the true body (*zhēnshēn*). The five organs conceal the five elements (*wǔxíng*).

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The “five elements” of Chinese philosophy (water, wood, fire, metal, and earth) are not substances or states of matter; they are stages in the continuous cycling of events. Thus, for example, the energy of water is represented by winter, the extreme of contraction or the *yīn* condition. It is full of stored, potential energy, the resting phase of indrawn tranquillity, consideration before action, and readiness for expansion into life.

Wood is the increased presence of *yáng* that emerges from the extreme *yīn* state of water. It represents spring and birth. It is the rapid development of the embryo and the newly born, the first irrepressible growth of green shoots and leaves from root or branch. It is the energy behind the procreative urge. It is the energy that initiates creative thought or action, the elation of new growth, the bursting forth of potential.

Similarly, the fire element is the full manifestation of the *yáng* condition. It is the fullness of summer after spring, the fully manifested outward expression of growth and life.

Metal energy is the time of fruitfulness, of harvest; the nostalgia of autumn, when the fullness of activity and energy begins to recede.

Earth energy provides balance between the seasons. Earth is that which maintains all that is positive and healthful in each of the four phases. It is the centre of being within each, where energy is not wasted, but used or conserved according to the best requirements of the moment.

Bearing in mind their characteristics and interrelationships, various physical phenomena have been grouped in fives. Each member of a group of five corresponds to one of the *wǔxíng*. Traditional Chinese Medicine, for example, describes five major organs, each organ associated with a particular element. Additionally, there are five curative modes, each mode associated with an element. Each of the five musical tones or pitches central to Chinese music corresponds to the qualities of one of the five elements. Other groups of five popularly associated with the *wǔxíng* include the five directions (north, south, east, west, and centre), five colours, five tastes, and five virtues.

Following the traditional philosophy, Liú Yīmíng therefore associates the five elements with the five organs and five virtues. “Cultivation of the true” means to refine the five elements and to rediscover the virtues inherently present in the five organs of the “false” body:

The cultivation of the Truth (*xiūzhēn*) is not cultivation of the physical body and the five organs. It is simply the cultivation of the true body (*zhēnshēn*) and refinement of the five elements (*wǔxíng*). It is no more than refining the true body and the five true elements (*wǔxíng*) by means of this false physical body and the five organs.

What makes the Truth true? The five elements (*wǔxíng*) are water, wood, fire, metal, and earth. The kidney is attributed to water; its virtue is wisdom (*zhì*). The liver is attributed to wood; its virtue is benevolence (*rén*). The heart is attributed to fire; its virtue is propriety (*lǐ*). The lungs are attributed to metal; their virtue is righteousness (*yì*). The spleen is attributed to earth; its virtue is truthfulness (*xìn*).

Water, wood, fire, metal, and earth are the nature of the five elements (*wǔxíng*). Wisdom, benevolence, propriety, righteousness, and truthfulness are the virtues of the five elements (*wǔxíng*). These are the inherent truth.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

He then outlines how these five inherent virtues become distorted and turn negative through the processes of living:

In the human body, spirit (*shén*) is concealed in the mind (*xīn*); when it shows itself, it appears as delight. The vital essence (*jīng*) is hidden in the kidneys; when it shows itself, it appears as sorrow. The higher soul (*hún*) is hidden in the liver; when it shows itself, it appears as joy. The lower soul (*pò*) is hidden in the lungs; when it shows itself, it appears as anger. Self-will (*yì*) is hidden in the spleen; when it shows itself, it appears as desire. These are all false (emotions) acquired after birth.

Líu Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The purpose of *nèidān* meditation practices is to “transform” the acquired and to reveal the “inherent”. This process of refinement takes place in the “elixir chamber (*dānfáng*)” of the body; but when the “medicine is complete” then the “elixir chamber” is no longer required:

Since first taking birth, the inherent has been mixed with the acquired and the acquired has been mixed with the inherent, the two becoming a composite mixture that is no longer pure. If the false acquired after birth is not removed by refinement, the inherent cannot be recovered. Refine the inherent by means of the acquired; use the inherent to transform the acquired.

When the acquired is totally transformed and the inherent is pure and whole, there appears a radiant jewel-like seed, its light permeating heaven and pervading earth in every direction. Then you see the *Dào* in everything, everywhere. Then your work is done, your practice complete. Then you break through space, and ascend to heaven in broad daylight (*báirì fēishēng*). Having no further need for the garb of skin, flesh and blood, you completely relinquish it. Just like when the refinement of medicine is complete, there is no further need for the elixir-mixing vessel (*dānfáng*).

Líu Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

These practices, he maintains, are the true inner alchemy. To interpret the language of external alchemy literally is a mistake:

The ignorant do not understand the symbolism in Daoist teachings. They make impetuous speculations and follow senseless practices. As it is said, “If there is no true seed (nothing to be transformed) in the cauldron, it is nothing more than fruitless boiling of water with fire.” An ancient immortal said, “Do not insist on the idea that this body is the *Dào*. You must know that there is a body of truth beyond the physical body (*shēnwài yǒuzhēnshēn*).” Those worldly people who use the garb of skin and flesh for practice, and those who spend their efforts on furnaces, metals, and stones are ignorant.

Líu Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The *Upper Scripture in Purple Script Inscribed by the Spirits* – an early text of the *Shàngqīng* school that relates revelations received by the visionary Yáng Xī between 364 and 370 CE – includes information concerning the methods of mental and physical refinement, specifically meditation. Written as the words of the deity *Qīngtóngjūn* (‘Lord Azure Lad’, the second highest *Shàngqīng* divinity), the text reveals both his own methods and his experiences of spiritual transformation:

Merging with the utter stillness of the dragon (spiritual) void (*kōng*), I buried the impulse to split hairs (*háománg*) deep within the cinnabar chamber (*dānshì*) of my heart and opened the spirit gates of my consciousness that I might give myself over to transformation, and release myself from entanglements by following the evolution of my changing form.

Just at this moment, my bonds and fetters fell away; my bodily spirits and breaths were made subtle. Reverently sloughing off my five bodily spirits, I entered into the flowing refinement of the hollow void, like a fish leaping through the shallows of a dark-blue ford – boldly and effortlessly.

Yáng Xī, Língshū zǐwén shàngjīng, DZ639 1b–2a; cf. EDSB p.309

The “cinnabar chamber” means the alchemical workshop or laboratory within the body. The ‘heart’, in Chinese thought, is the home or ‘seat’ of the spirit.¹ *Háománg* (hair tips) has been translated as ‘to split hairs’; in Daoist writings, the expression generally refers to an overly detailed analysis of a problem. In this instance, on merging with the “void (*kōng*)”, the meditator lays to rest further mental analysis. The “bodily spirits” are the five spirits (*wǔshén*) who inhabit the three registers (*lù*, registers containing details of an individual’s destiny, deeds, and so on) of the human body and who are responsible for forming the embryo after conception, and for keeping an account of the merit and demerit earned during the course of a person’s life.² In the words of *Qīngtóngjūn*, having “made subtle” one’s physical form, the meditator has no further need of these spirits.

The meditation practices described in this text involve various ways of ingesting or absorbing the energy (*qì*) of the sun and moon, manipulating and controlling various subtle body energies, and activating certain spirits believed to dwell within the body. Methods include knocking the teeth together (to alert the body spirits to the start of the ritual), prostrations, ingestion of *qì* by gulping air, murmured incantations, and visualizations associated with particular bodily locations. Many of the practices and the associated symbolism include a sexual element.³ A similarity of principle with Buddhist and Hindu tantric practices is evident throughout.

See also: **nèidān**.

1. See **xīn** (5.1).
2. See Isabelle Robinet, *Taoist Meditation, TMMS* p.100ff.; see also **lù** (8.4).
3. See Stephen Bokenkamp, *Early Daoist Scriptures, EDSB* pp.283–89.

dāntián (C) *Lit.* elixir (*dān*) field (*tián*); cinnabar field, red field; in Daoism, three fields or sites in the human body that play a major role in *nèidān* (inner alchemy) generally, and particularly in meditation and breathing exercises. Though having no specific physical location, these three fields (*sāntián*) or three chambers (*sānfáng*) are nominally understood to be in the abdomen (*qìhǎi*, ocean of *qì*), in the heart (*jiànggōng*, crimson palace), and in the head or brain (*níwángōng*, palace of *níwán*, palace of *nirvāṇa*). They represent a threefold division of inner space with correspondences to various other tripartite aspects of the Daoist pantheon and cosmology. These three *dāntián* represent the seat of, respectively, *jīng* (vital essence), *qì* (subtle life energy), and *shén* (spirit).¹ However, the names and locations of the three fields are commonly interchanged in different texts, creating a fair degree of confusion.

Lower Elixir Field (xià dāntián)

Also referred to as the *dāntián* proper, this is the seat of *jīng* (vital essence). According to different sources, it is variously sited below or behind the navel. Traditional Chinese medical texts tend to position it below the navel, while *nèidān* texts say it is found behind the navel. According to different authors, the lower *dāntián* is considered to be the same as, or closely related to, other locations in the lower part of the body, namely the *mìngmén* (gate of life), the *guānyuán* (origin of the pass, or gate of the origin), and the *qìhǎi* (ocean of *qì*). The lower *dāntián* lies near to the *huìyīn* (gathering of *yīn*, the perineum), at the meeting point of the *dūmài* (governing vessel, control channel) and the *rènmài* (conception vessel, function channel) meridians, as understood in Traditional Chinese Medicine. During the first stage of the *nèidān* practice, circulating *jīng* along these two meridians generates the inner elixir, a process referred to as *liànjīng huàqì* (refining vital essence and transmuting it into subtle life energy).

Middle Elixir Field (zhōng dāntián)

This is the seat of *qì* (subtle life energy). According to different sources it is situated either at the centre of the chest or between the heart and the navel. The middle *dāntián* is also identified with the *huángtíng* (yellow court, regarded by some as the lower *dāntián* and by others as the upper *dāntián*), *jiànggōng* (crimson palace), and the *xuánpìn* (mysterious female). Its central position in the body has also inspired names such as *zhōnggōng* (central palace) and *shēnzhōng yīqiào* (one opening at a person's centre, one opening at the centre of being). During the second stage of *nèidān* meditation practice – referred to

as *liànzì huàshén* (refining subtle energy and transmuting it into spirit) – the inner elixir is moved from the lower *dāntián* to the middle *dāntián*, where it is nourished.

Upper Elixir Field (shàng dāntián)

This is the seat of *shén* (spirit), located in the region of the brain. It is also known as *níwángōng* and *qiángōng*. *Níwángōng* means ‘palace of *níwán*’. *Níwán* is literally translated as ‘muddy pellet’ or ‘mud ball’, which in this context means very little and is probably a rendering of *nirvāṇa*. *Qiángōng* means ‘palace of *qián*’, which refers to the *Yijing* trigram representing *chúnyáng* or pure *yáng*.² *Níwángōng* is further divided into *jiǔgōng* (nine palaces), which are arranged in two rows: four palaces on the upper row and five on the lower. According to different authors, *níwán* may refer to either the entire upper *dāntián* or to the central palace on the lower row. During the third and final stage of *nèidān* practice – referred to as *liànshén huánxū* (refining spirit and returning it to the Void) – the inner elixir is moved from the middle *dāntián* to the upper *dāntián*.

Meditation and Dāntián

A second-century (CE) text links *dāntián* to meditation practices, describing ardent Daoists coming from afar to the temple erected in honour of the legendary immortal Wángzǐ Qiào, some of whom would talk about visualization as the means of traversing the cinnabar field (*dāntián*).³ Another second-century text explains that *dān* (elixir, cinnabar, red) does not refer to the mineral cinnabar (mercury sulphide), but to the red colour of the innermost part of the *dāntián*. This text describes the lower *dāntián* as being “crimson inside”, and says that it symbolizes “the trinity of heaven, earth, and human beings” and is “the home of the (spiritual) embryo” and “the root of a human being”.⁴

In other early texts, the three *dāntián* are described as the residences of inner deities visualized by practitioners in meditation – in particular, the One (*yī*), understood in this context as a deity who moves through the three *dāntián* within the human body. A well-known description of the three *dāntián* appears in the fourth-century *Book of the Master who Embraces Simplicity*:

The One ... dwells in the *xià dāntián*, two inches and four tenths below the navel. Sometimes, it is in the *zhōng dāntián*, the golden portal of the crimson palace (*jiàngōng jīnquē*) below the heart (*xīn*). Sometimes it is in the space between the eyebrows – one inch behind them is the hall of light (*míngtáng*); at two inches is the cavern chamber (*dòngfáng*); and at three inches is the *shàng dāntián*.

Gě Hóng, Bàopǔjī nèipiān 18, BNJM p.323, DZ1185 1b, JY144; cf. in ET1 p.303

Scriptures of the *Shàngqīng* school of Daoism (C3rd onwards) further developed these meditation practices. The *Scripture on the Immaculate*

*Spirit*⁵ gives an outline of a meditation method based on the notion of the *sānyī* ('the Three Ones'), deities who reside in the three *dāntián*. This text describes the upper *dāntián* in terms similar to those in the *Book of the Master who Embraces Simplicity*.⁶

See also: **jīng-qì-shén** (►1).

1. See "dantian," *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ETI pp.302–3.
2. E.g. see *Huángtíng jīng*, DZ331–32.
3. See S.P. Bumbacher, "Early Buddhism in China," in *SOB* p.220.
4. *Lǎozǐ zhōngjīng*, DZ1032 18:13a, YQ18–19; cf. in *TBKS* p.106ff.
5. *Sùlǐng jīng*, DZ1314.
6. Gě Hóng, *Bàopǔzǐ nèipiān*, DZ1185, JY144; see *TMMS* p.125ff.

dǎoyǐn (C) *Lit.* guiding (*dǎo*) and stretching (*yǐn*); guiding and pulling; Daoist exercises involving stretching, together with breathing exercises and various meditative techniques, performed daily and usually undertaken in a quiet, closed room rather than outdoors; a form of callisthenics, sometimes referred to in the West as 'Daoist yoga'.

Developed during the early *Hàn* dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), *dǎoyǐn* is often practised in monasteries and retreats as an aid to spiritual cultivation – generally to preserve good health, but also to cure specific ailments and benefit internal organs. Some of the exercises have been perpetuated in present-day *qìgōng* (*ch'i kung*). Other exercise regimes, like *tàijíquán* (*t'ai chi chüan*), are said to have originated partially from *dǎoyǐn*.

Unlike exercise regimes such as *tàijíquán*, which involve flowing or sequential movements without pauses, *dǎoyǐn* usually involves the holding of specific postures. Some are standing, others are seated or supine, with some systems combining all three. These postures are usually accompanied by conscious, directed breathing exercises, with the primary intention of maintaining good health and prolonging life.

Earliest descriptions of *dǎoyǐn* include the illustrated second-century (BCE) *Dǎoyǐn tú* ('Exercise Chart')¹ and the *Yǐnshū* ('Stretching Book').² *Dǎoyǐn* is also referred to as *yǎngshēng* ('nourishing life'), and the two names are sometimes used interchangeably, though the latter has a broader scope. Sometimes the terms are combined, as in *Tàiqīng dǎoyǐn yǎngshēng jīng* ('Scripture on Great Clarity on *Dǎoyǐn* and *Yǎngshēng*'), the full title of a text on the entire subject.

In Daoist training, *dǎoyǐn* is most often used as a supplement to seated meditation.³ The mid-*Hàn*-dynasty alchemical text *Scripture on the Yellow Emperor's Divine Cinnabar of the Nine Tripods* points out that it is only inner spiritual practice that can confer spiritual immortality, not physical exercises or dietary regimes:

Through breathing (*hūxī*) exercises and *dǎoyǐn*, by taking herbs and plant medicines, you may extend your years, but you will not avoid death in the end. Only partaking of the divine elixir (*shéndān*) will give you long life without end and allow you to live as long as heaven and earth.

Huángdì jiǔdǐng shéndān jīng, in *Gě Hóng, Bàopǔzǐ nèipiān* 4,
DZ1185 6a–b; cf. TEAK p.308

An earlier reference to *dǎoyǐn* is found in the *Zhuāngzǐ* (c. C3rd BCE). While emphasizing meditation as a method of attaining mystical union with the *Dào*, the writer seems to be referring to *Wǔqín xì* (‘Five Animal Frolics’), a key *dǎoyǐn* exercise (also found in *qìgōng*) that was later documented in the *Dǎoyǐn tú*. This exercise mimics the movement and manner of five animals, namely a tiger, a deer, a bear, a monkey, and a bird (crane):

To practise *chuī*, *xū*, *hū* and *xī* breathing, to expel the old (*tùgǔ*) and ingest the new (*nàxīn*), and to engage in bear-hangings (*xióngjīng*) and bird-stretchings (*niǎoshēn*), with longevity one’s only concern – such are the practices of *dǎoyǐn* adepts – people who nourish their bodies (*yǎngxíng*) and hope to live as long as Pénzgǔ.

Zhuāngzǐ 15, in DTK p.189

Pénzgǔ is a legendary immortal who is reputed to have lived for some 800 years, eating only cinnamon. In this chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*, *dǎoyǐn* practitioners are associated with five lower forms of practice, and are contrasted with the Daoist sage (*shèngrén*) who strives for mystical union with the *Dào*.

The *Dǎoyǐn jīng* (‘*Dǎoyǐn* Scripture,’ C4th CE), a manual of exercises popular in medieval China, deals almost exclusively with *dǎoyǐn*. It acknowledges the physical and energetic benefits of *dǎoyǐn*, but points out that such physical exercises are only intended as a support for more important spiritual practices, such as meditation. The “elixir field (*dāntián*) in the abdomen” is one of the three areas of subtle energy in the body, according to esoteric Chinese philosophy:

To practise properly, always keep your mind firmly concentrated on the One and return it to the elixir field (*dāntián*) in the abdomen. What brings people to life is the elixir (*dān*); what affords them salvation is the act of returning (*huán*). Once the elixir (*dān*) is fully restored, you can extend your years.

We practise *dǎoyǐn* because it makes all the negative energy (*xiéqì*) evaporate from our limbs, bones, and joints. Thus only positive energy (*zhèngqì*) prevails, and can become more pure and essential. . . .

Practise the exercises diligently and with care whenever you have time between work and conversation. Either in the morning or at night is fine. Gradually your bones and joints will become firm and strong. The hundred diseases will be completely eliminated. . . .

Thus, following the *dào* (way) of natural spontaneity as diligently as you can, you will attain a state of mutual protection with heaven and earth.

Dǎoyǐn jīng, DZ818 2a–2b; cf. TEAK p.144

Daoists throughout history have concerned themselves with vitality, longevity and immortality, and many have engaged in *dǎoyǐn* and *yǎngshēng* practices either as a foundation for or as a complement to spiritual practice. This is something attested by the sheer volume of related texts in the Daoist canon. A typical eighth-century commentary on a third-century text advises the use of *dǎoyǐn* in association with breathing exercises and meditation practices that are designed to control the body energy and focus it in the head:

Practise breathing and *dǎoyǐn*; close your eyes and turn your vision inward; calm your mind and concentrate your thoughts. Merge with undifferentiated wholeness (*hùndùn*) in the limitless (*wúyá*)! Let vital essence (*jīng*) turn upward and circulate in the *níwán* (the upper *dāntián* in the head). This will bring about the perfected master elixir (*zhēnrén zǐ dān*). . . . Never slacken in your practice of this *dào*.

Liángqiūzǐ, *Huángtíng wàijīng yùjīng zhù*, in *Xiūzhēn shíshū*, DZ263 58:1a–4b, YQ12:28b–31b; cf. TEAK pp.182–83

The “perfected master elixir” is the inherent spiritual awareness of one’s original nature.

See also: **yǎngshēng**, **yǎngxíng**.

1. Discovered in 1973 in a 136 BCE tomb at Mǎwángduī in central China’s Húnán province.
2. Discovered in 1983 in a 186 BCE tomb at Mount Zhāngjiā in central China’s Húběi province.
3. See Louis Komjathy, *Daoist Tradition*, DTK p.197ff.

dawn The time when light appears at the start of a day; daybreak, sunrise. The time before dawn has often been described as a time of peace, and has been recommended as the time most suitable for meditation. The body and mind have been refreshed by sleep, and the worries and concerns of the day may have yet to assail the mind. Prayer and meditation at the start of the day set a mood or trend in the mind that influences the it throughout the day. In the Christian monastic tradition, prayers follow in a regular sequence throughout the twenty-four hours, so that the mind is continually reminded of God. The same principle holds true of Muslim prayers, performed five times a day.

In biblical literature, especially in the *Psalms*, dawn has been described as a sacred time and a time for prayer, the meaning of which often seems to be that of early morning meditation or contemplation:

Yahweh, let my words come to Your ears,
 spare a thought for my sighs.
 Listen to my cry for help,
 my King and my God!

I say this prayer to You, *Yahweh*,
 for at daybreak You listen for my voice;
 And at dawn I hold myself in readiness for You,
 I watch for You.

Psalms 5:1–3, JB

In a number of psalms, the devotee speaks of the divine Word. Here, it is as the focus of his meditation:

Sincere, my call – *Yahweh*, answer me!
 I will respect Your statutes.
 I invoke You, save me,
 I will observe Your decrees.
 I am up before dawn to call for help,
 I put my hope in Your Word.
 I lie awake throughout the night,
 to meditate on your promise.
 In Your love, *Yahweh*, listen to my voice,
 let Your rulings give me life.

Psalms 119:145–49, JB

In one of the psalms, the grace and power of the Word is portrayed as a “river” that refreshes the “city of God”, a metaphor for the soul dwelling in a human body. God is within the city, and communes with the soul at the “crack of dawn”:

There is a River whose streams refresh the city of God,
 and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High.
 God is inside the city, she can never fall,
 at the crack of dawn God helps her.

Psalms 46:4–5, JB

The soul’s longing for the Divine is also expressively depicted, having much in common with the songs of longing written by the Sufis or some of the Indian *sants*:

Quick, *Yahweh*, answer me
 before my spirit fails;
 If You hide Your Face much longer,
 I shall go down to the Pit like the rest.
 Let dawn bring proof of Your love,
 for one who relies on You;
 Let it show the right road,
 to one who lifts up his soul to You.

Psalms 143:7–8, JB

The author of the *Wisdom of Solomon* writes in the same tradition:

To give You thanks, we must rise before the sun,
 and pray to You when light begins to dawn.

Wisdom of Solomon 16:28, JB

While the lover in the *Song of Songs* tells her beloved:

Before the dawn wind rises,
 before the shadows flee,
 I will go to the mountain of myrrh,
 to the hill of frankincense.

Song of Songs 4:6, JB

The fragrant “mountain of myrrh” and the “hill of frankincense” are allusions to the holy City, the mountain of God, the eternal realm. Once more, this longing reaches its zenith at night and in the early morning hours “before the dawn wind rises”.

Although the *Psalms* are traditionally ascribed to King David (C11th–10th BCE), the authors are unknown. From an even earlier time, there is the biblical legend of the Israelites whom God provided every night with *manna*, during their wanderings in the desert. Moses instructed them that it must be collected before sunrise, after which it melted away.¹ The story has often been understood allegorically in both Jewish and Christian traditions as the divine Word, the Bread of Heaven. That it melted away after sunrise suggests that the best time for meditation on the divine Word is before dawn.

Moving forward in history to the first century CE, Philo Judaeus writes of the *Therapeutai* (Gk. healers), a group of Jewish contemplatives whom he had visited, and who had settled on the shores of Lake Mareotis, near Alexandria:

Twice a day, at dawn and eventide, they are accustomed to offer up their prayers. At sunrise, they pray for sunshine, the real sunshine that fills their minds with heavenly delight. At sunset, they pray that their soul,

relieved of desire for the senses and sense objects, may completely withdraw into its own company and council chamber, there to pursue the Truth. The interval between early morning and evening is spent entirely in spiritual exercises.

Philo Judaeus, On the Contemplative Life 4:3; cf. PCW9 pp.126–29, TGH2 p.252

In Christianity, morning time is again recommended as best for prayer, when body and mind are refreshed by sleep:

Every night we should take the sleep we need to keep usefully awake the next day, for there is great virtue in going to bed early that we may rise early; countless examples in the scriptures and in the lives of the saints, and natural reasons also, point to the morning as the best and most fruitful part of the day. . . . Certainly, dawn is the most beautiful, the most pleasant and the most peaceful time of day, the very birds inviting us to rise and praise God, so that early rising is conducive both to health and holiness.

François de Sales, Devout Life 3:23, IDL p.152

Forming the habit of daily meditation is a prerequisite for the development of an inner spiritual life, whatever path or tradition one may follow, and Buddhist monks have likewise recommended early morning as a good time for meditation. Looking at things from the Buddhist perspective, the Malaysian monk Venerable Sujiva (*b.*1951) considers the practicalities of developing the habit of meditation since, to begin with, it is a struggles to bring the scattered mind to meditate even for just a few minutes:

Not many people can actually meditate without fail. It takes a lot of determination. So, how can it be done? Follow this simple rule. Every day, make it a point to meditate for one minute. If you watch ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ (of the breath) for sixty times, it is already more than one minute. If you can meditate for one minute a day, first thing in the morning and last thing before you sleep, you can surely meditate for a longer time than that. If you sit and watch ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ sixty times, you will feel calm. Then go on to meditate for two minutes. If you can meditate for two minutes, you can go on for three minutes. After five minutes, you may have had enough, but it has already made a difference to your day. You start the day happier, more mindful.

The secret is in getting started, getting the engine going. When it is cold, you may not want to meditate. But just start the engine and it will go on for some time. This daily practice can affect our daily life, and the meditation practice is maintained to some extent. Even if it is not in depth, at least it is expanding our experiences and building

a strong base so that when the conditions are more suitable, like in a retreat, our meditation picks up very fast.

Venerable Sujiva, Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice, EIMP pp.240–41

He also suggests chanting, as a means of putting the mind into a receptive mood:

Sometimes, just through daily practice, some people can progress quite far. These people meditate regularly, every day without fail. Another thing that can help in this one-hour-a-day practice is concentration to help calm the mind quickly. It does not take much effort to go from a really restless mind to a peaceful mind. Do *mettā* (lovingkindness) chanting for ten or even five minutes to keep thoughts away, and the mind will come to a calm state so that you can go into *vipassanā* (insight meditation) without wasting much time. This ability has to be developed. Those who know chanting can follow the chanting on a tape with mindfulness and cut off all thoughts, so that the moment they sit, the mind is already calmed down and they can watch with mindfulness. Otherwise thinking and anger will intrude, and by the time your one hour is up, you probably had only five minutes of watching ‘rising’ and ‘falling’ and already feel dead tired.

Venerable Sujiva, Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice, EIMP p.241

Planning the day with meditation in mind is also essential:

If you are a very busy person and meditate at the end of the day, then you do not need to do much walking. If you have been expending a lot of physical energy during the day, you may be tired. If you are really tired, get some sleep before you wake up to meditate. The best time for busy people is to meditate in the morning. You would have had enough rest and your mind is calm. You must get into the habit of waking up early and allowing yourself time to meditate. Otherwise if you only have half an hour to meditate, you will be thinking of what you’ve got to do in your job before the half hour is up.

Another strategy to help you in daily mindfulness is to have proper planning. When you organize your work well, you do not have to think so much. If you do not have to think so much, the mind will not be so restless. Being organized will also give you time to do a lot of wholesome things.

Venerable Sujiva, Essentials of Insight Meditation Practice, EIMP p.241

Maharaj Charan Singh (1916–1990), a master within the Indian *sant* tradition, replying to a question on the subject, also points out the benefits of the early morning hours:

There's no particular time for meditation. Whatever time you can attend to meditation is to your credit, but the morning time has certain advantages over other times. When you get up in the morning, the first thing is you are absolutely fresh. Your tiredness is gone. Your mind is not scattered, and you are not distracted by outside disturbances. There's no telephone ring, there's no knock at the door, and there's no hustle and bustle of traffic outside. So it's a quiet time. And then, when you are going to start a day, why not start it in the name of the Father? That atmosphere of bliss which you build by meditation should go with you the whole day to help you face the ups and downs of life without losing your balance.

But if you can't find any time for meditation in the morning, you can easily sit at noon. There's no harm. But then you have to attend to your office work. There may be a knock at the door, and somebody may come unannounced and may even spoil your meditation time. In the evening if you sit in meditation, naturally you have worked the whole day and you are tired. Your mind is scattered and you can't concentrate so easily. That is why the morning time has advantages over other times. But if you don't get the morning time, any time is good for meditation.

In India, at least in the olden days, people used to go to sleep at sunset and would get up before sunrise. So, three o'clock is a very good time for meditation because the day starts at six. Then, before the day starts, one can attend to meditation. And if one has his evening meal, then sleeps fairly early, one easily gets seven to eight hours of sleep.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 37, DTL pp.74–75

So far as forming a habit of meditation is concerned, the kind of meditation being practised makes little difference, because the nature of the mind is the same, regardless of one's belief system. Maharaj Charan Singh says:

You know the advantage of regularity and punctuality. Now when lunchtime comes, whether we are hungry or not we quietly go to the dining table, because we have formed the habit of eating at that particular time.

Similarly, we have to form a habit of meditation. If you say, "When I feel the urge I will meditate," you would perhaps never meditate. If you think, "When I feel the right atmosphere, then I will meditate. I will sit in the morning, I will sit at noon, I will sit in the evening," you will always go on giving excuses to yourself; you will never attend to meditation.

Just as you have made a habit of going to the office at a particular time, of going for a walk at a particular time, of going to the dining

table at a particular time, similarly you should make a habit of going at a particular time for meditation. Then your mind slowly and slowly is disciplined to attend to meditation. That is why so much emphasis is laid on regularity and punctuality.

If you say, “All right, today I don’t feel like meditating; I’ll sit tomorrow,” then tomorrow again you’ll have some other excuse, and the day after tomorrow again you’ll have another excuse. Then there will be gaps and gaps and gaps of time, and you’ll think, “Oh, I have absolutely forgotten for months and months to sit in meditation.” But if you force your mind to meditate and say, “Even if I can’t give the proper time to meditation, let me give at least half the time, even if I’m busy,” then you’ll get regularity.

And punctuality is also important because we have associations with timing. If you have selected a particular time for meditation – for example, 3:30 a.m. or 4:30 a.m. – you know that you have to get up punctually in the morning, and you will also be punctual in going to sleep at night. You will adjust your time in such a way that you get six or seven hours of sleep so that you can get up in the morning. Otherwise you know that you will miss your morning meditation. To this extent punctuality is essential. It should become a habit with us.

Unless we discipline our mind this much, our mind will always find excuses not to sit in meditation. We are regular in our other daily activities – “I have a time to go to the office; I have a time to go to lunch; I have a time to have a cup of coffee; I have a time to walk in the evening; I have a time to sleep” – then why not also have a time for meditation? It should become a part of our life, a part of our daily routine.

If you discipline your mind every day by attending to meditation punctually, then you won’t miss meditation, and if you do miss it, then you’ll feel miserable that day. You’ll feel that something is lacking, and you will try to find some other time for meditation to make up for the lost morning time. Thus, regularity and punctuality are both essential, if we can manage it.

Even having a particular place to sit makes a lot of difference in our meditation. Now, a bed is associated with sleep. If you want to read in bed, the moment you are in bed you will fall asleep, because you have an association of the bed with sleep. If you sit at a writing table, you automatically feel like writing a letter to somebody, because you associate that table with writing letters. If you sit on a comfortable chair, you’ll feel like relaxing; you associate relaxation with that chair. So also, if you find a particular place for meditation, then you will have an association with that place for meditation, and that place will remind you to attend to meditation.

These things are just to induce us to attend to meditation – nothing else. Otherwise, even if you can keep to meditation without regularity, it is all right. If you can keep to meditation without having a particular place for meditation, it is all right. These are just inducements to the mind not to run away from meditation.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 37, DTL pp.71–73

See also: **night, time for prayer.**

1. *Exodus* 16:19–21.

daybreak, early morning See **dawn, night.**

dǎzuò, jìngzuò, zuò (C) *Lit.* to engage in (*dǎ*) sitting (*zuò*); to sit (*zuò*) still or quietly (*jìng*); to sit in meditation; a major form of Daoist practice, performed with the intention of realizing and merging with the *Dào*, through the manifestation of its nature, characteristics, and virtue (*dé*).¹ Daoist meditation generally involves seated postures, so meditation is commonly called *dǎzuò*; however, there are other types of Daoist meditation that involve standing, walking, or lying down.

The *Scripture on Purity and Stillness* (C8th) first indicates the causes of mental and spiritual disharmony, and then points out the means of bringing the spirit back to its original purity (*qīng*) and stillness (*jìng*):

The human spirit (*shén*) tends towards purity (*qīng*),
but the mind (*xīn*) disturbs it.

The human mind (*xīn*) tends towards stillness (*jìng*),
but desires (*yù*) draw it away.

Qīngjìng jīng, DZ620 1b, JY262 2:5b

Therefore:

If you can banish desires (*yù*) for good,
then the mind (*xīn*) will automatically be still (*jìng*).

If you can cleanse the mind (*xīn*) for good,
then the spirit (*shén*) will automatically be clear (*qīng*).

Qīngjìng jīng, DZ620 1b, JY262 2:5b

The text explains that the mind (*xīn*) is the pivot because it becomes agitated due to desire and mental activity, which result in turbidity or impurity of the spirit (*shén*). However, both mind and spirit may be returned to their original states by ‘restoring’ the mind. This is achieved through the extinguishing of

all desire and the calming of all superfluous mental activity. When the mind returns to its original stillness, the spirit automatically becomes pure or clear (*qīng*). This results in awareness of the presence of the *Dào* resuming its rightful place in the inner being of the practitioner.

Master Táng Guāngxiān (C20th) agrees that the mind must be cleared of “all impurity” in order to see the truth. He adds that this is important even if the practitioner is not practising sitting meditation:

The exercise of sitting (meditation) is called *jìngzuò* (sitting in stillness) because it cleanses all impurity from the mind. Once the impurity has been removed, the mind becomes clear and still, and the truth of the *Dào* is naturally and automatically revealed.

For those who cannot see the truth of the *Dào*, it is because their mind is too restless, and cannot see deeply past the transient nature of things.

For those who practise the *Dào*, whether or not they are sitting in meditation (*jìngzuò*), it is imperative to cleanse and clear all accumulated impurity from the mind. As a *Shāng* dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BCE) inscription says, “Renew it day by day.” But no need to worry; after some time, you will automatically see the benefit.

Táng Guāngxiān, Liǎodào mǐlù, JH77

A poem entitled ‘Song of Silent Sitting’, attributed to master Zhāng Sānfēng (C14th) and written in the symbolic language of inner alchemy (*nèidān*), covers both the philosophy and the method of attaining Daoism’s highest goal:

Sitting silently (*dǎzuò*), practise meditation (*cānchán*):

the focus is at *xuánguān* (the mysterious pass).

Continuously and gently regulate your breathing:

one *yīn* and one *yáng* brewing in the internal cauldron (*dǐngnèi*).

Your (original) nature (*xìng*) must become enlightened

and your (true spiritual) life (*mìng*) become whole.

Do not rush! Let the fire burn slowly.

Close your eyes and contemplate the heart of your life:

let tranquillity and spontaneity be the source.

In a hundred days you will see a result:

a drop of elixir rises from the threshold (*kǎn*),

the yellow woman is the matchmaker in between,

both the baby and the red lady are perfect.

The beauty is boundless and inexplicable:

throughout the body, life energy (*qì*) arises.

Who can know such a marvellous experience?

It is like a dumb person having a beautiful dream.

Without delay, absorb the inherent essence (*xiāntiān*).
 The spiritual medicine (*língyào*) breaks through the three obstacles:
 rising through the fields of elixir (*dāntián*)
 to the top at *nǐwán* (in the head),
 then submerging into the *zhōngyuán* (original centre).
 Water and fire combine to form real mercury,
 without *wù* and *jǐ* there is no elixir.

Let the mind be still and let life be strong.
 The radiance of the spirit penetrates three thousand worlds.
 The golden cockerel crows beneath the shadowless tree.
 The red lotus blossoms in the middle of night.

Winter comes; the sun shines again,
 a thunderous roar shatters heaven and earth.
 Dragons call, tigers play,
 heavenly music fills the sky with harmony.

In utterly undifferentiated abstruseness (*huǎnghuǎng hūhū*),
 everything is empty (*wú*),
 creation and its inexhaustible transformations (*zàohuà*) are all here –
 Marvellous in its mystery,
 mysterious in its marvel.

The circulation of the stream breaks through the three obstacles;
 All phenomena are born in the union of heaven and earth.
 Drink the dew of nature, sweet like honey;
 Immortals (*xiān*) are *buddhas* (*fó*), *buddhas* are immortals.

When the one complete original nature (*yīxìng yuán*) is revealed,
 duality disappears –
 Now I realize that all religions are the same!

Eat when hungry, sleep when tired.
 Offer incense and practise meditation (*chán*).
 The great *Dào* is just before your eyes:
 if you are deluded, you will miss your chance.

Once you have lost your human form,
 you may have to wait a million aeons.
 The uninformed dream of going to heaven,
 the blind go into a deep forest to practise.

The ultimate secret is a wonder known only to heaven:
disclosing the ultimate secret is a heavy sin.
Cultivate the four true principles,
breaking the gate of mystery to reach the wondrous.

Cultivate day and night without a break.
Find a master early to develop your elixir:
there are those who know the true mercury,
which is the elixir of longevity and immortality.

Cultivate every day, and be more determined every day:
do not regard spiritual cultivation as a casual affair.
To succeed, one must cultivate for three years or nine years
before a pearl of elixir can be cultivated.

If you want to know who composed this song,
it is by the Daoist priest of purity and emptiness,
the saint Zhāng Sānfēng.

*“Dǎzuò gē,” in Zhāng Sānfēng xiānshēng quánjī,
JY236, ZW125; cf. in CBTW pp.19–21*

The “yellow woman” represents *qì* (subtle life energy) and, in this sense, is ‘between’ *jīng* (vital essence) and spirit (*shén*), since yellow symbolizes the centre or middle. ‘Yellow’ is also symbolic of radiant golden light, and ‘woman’ represents the nature of giving life. The timeframes “three years” and “nine years (*jiǔnián*)” are alchemical expressions referring to the period of dedicated spiritual practice required to ‘cultivate the elixir pill’ – to attain realization of the *Dào* – however long that may take for each individual. The expressions are symbolic of a long time, rather than a specific period.

The modern writer Wong Kiew Kit offers a further interpretation of some of the symbolic language used in the poem:

Xuánguān, *dāntián*, *níwán* and *zhōngyuán* are various energy fields in the body. *Kǎn* refers to the abdomen; *wù* and *jǐ* refer to the circulation of vital energy round the body in a *qìgōng* art known as the “small universe”. “Yellow woman”, “baby”, “red lady”, “dragons”, “tigers” and “golden cockerel” are symbolic terms describing the application of mind and energy in harmonious unity to produce a pearl of elixir or an internal illumination. “Shadowless tree” is an allusion to Huìnéng’s, “*Bodhi* is not a tree,” which is a *Zen* (Buddhist) way of saying that ultimate Reality is formless; the “four true principles” are the “four noble truths”, which form the basis of the Buddha’s teaching.

Wong Kiew Kit, Complete Book of Tai Chi Chuan, CBTW p.21

Biographies of the Karmic Outcomes of the Seven Masters, a manual of Daoist training written in the form of a popular novel by an unknown author around 1500 CE, uses simpler language to describe a similar experience. The book relates master Wáng Zhé's (C12th) answer to a question concerning meditation from the husband-and-wife disciples Mǎ Yù and Sūn Bù'èr, two of master Wáng Zhé's seven close disciples, who themselves became masters:

Mǎ Dānyáng (Yù) and Sūn Bù'èr asked about meditation (*dǎzuò*). Wáng Chóngyáng (Wáng Zhé) said, "In meditation (*jìngzuò*) all thoughts must cease. When the ego is dead, the spirit emerges. When you sit (*zuò*), sit on a cushion, loosen your clothing. At the hour of *zǐ* (11:00 p.m.) cross your legs gently and sit facing east. Clasp your hands together and place them in front of your body. Your back should be straight. Strike your teeth together and swallow your saliva. Place the tongue against the palate of your mouth. You should be alert in listening, but do not be attached to sounds. Let your eyes drop, but do not close them. Focus on the light that you see in front of you and concentrate on the lower *dāntián*. In meditation (*jìngzuò*), it is very important to stop thinking. If thoughts arise, the spirit will not be pure, and your efforts of cultivation will come to nothing. In addition, you should drop all feelings. Once feelings arise, the heart will not be still, and the attainment of the *Dào* is impossible."

Wáng Chóngyáng continued, "Sit (*zuò*) on a cushion and you will be able to sit long without feeling tired. Loosen your clothing so that the movement of internal energy will not be constricted. The hour of *zǐ* is when the first ray of light (*yáng*) appears. Face east because energy (*qì*) flows in from the east at the hour of the first light (*yáng*). Clasp your hands in the *tàijí* symbol, because it symbolizes emptiness of form. Sit (*zuò*) with your back straight, because only with a vertical spine can the energy rise to the head. Close your mouth and place the tongue against the palate, so that the internal energy cannot dissipate. The ear is associated with vital essence (*jīng*). Being attached to sound will dissipate this energy. Do not close your eyes, for they let the light in to shine on your spirit. If you close your eyes, the spirit will be dimmed. If you open them too wide, the spirit will escape. Therefore, you should lower the eyelids, but not close them. Concentrate on the lower *dāntián* as if to reflect the light of your eyes onto it, because here is the mystery of all things. Minimize speech, as this conserves life energy (*qì*). Rest your ears, as this conserves vital essence (*jīng*). Dissolve thoughts to conserve spirit energy (*shén*). When all these energies are not dissipated, then you will attain immortality (become a *zhēnrén*, a Daoist master)."

Qīzhēn yīnguǒ zhuàn 8, ZW986; cf. *TTW* pp.136–37

In his commentary on a poem by master Sūn Bù'èr, the twentieth-century master Chén Yīngníng explains how sages break through the barrier of the mind by sitting quietly in the early morning hours, stopping all thoughts, and letting go of all attachment to external things:

Sages observe the way of heaven, and grasp the actions of heaven. Every morning before sunrise they sit in stillness (*jìngzuò*), focus their mind's attention, and stay empty. Inwardly they are free of thoughts and intentions; outwardly they remain detached from the myriad things, oblivious to the creation, beyond concern for their physical form.

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù'èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù, SBNN

He further explains the necessity of absorbing energy (*qì*):

For those who cultivate immortality, it is essential to collect the clear and spiritual energy (*qì*) of the Void, and refine and nurture it together with the spirit (*shén*) within. After a long time, spirit (*shén*) and energy (*qì*) will merge into one, and the great elixir will begin to manifest. It is best to live in the mountains during the latter part of this work, because the pure and sublime energy (*qì*) of the mountain air is superior to that of towns and cities.

When going to the mountains, you need to assess the lie of the land before choosing somewhere to live. Whether you build a hut or live in a cave, the place should face the sunlight, with its back to the shade, sheltered from the wind, where energy (*qì*) can collect. When the sun and moon rise and set and the wheel of creation turns, the practising Daoist should sit in meditation (*dǎzuò*). With such limitless, pure and sublime energy (*qì*) to develop and nurture the original spirit (*yuánshén*), how can one not transform oneself (*tuōtāi huàngǔ*)?

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù'èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù, SBNN

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) provides more detail on the recommended method of seated meditation. He explains how to settle into the posture at the outset, how to end each session, and how to get up when the meditation session is over:

When you sit (*dǎzuò*), lay down thick cushions so that the body is free of pain. Loosen your clothing and your belt so that energy is unrestrained.

To sit (*zuò*) in the lotus position, first put the left foot on the right thigh, then put the right foot on the left thigh; or, in the half lotus position, the left foot is on the right foot. Either way is fine. Then put the left hand in the right palm, so that the tips of the thumbs touch each other. Gently lift the body and rearrange yourself from side to

side in order to settle the body. After that, sit up straight, so that the waist, spine, neck, and head joints are all in alignment. Align your ears with your shoulders, and your nose with your navel. Press the tongue against the upper palate, with lips and teeth touching. Leave the eyes slightly open; do not shut them completely – otherwise, like in the ‘ghost cave under the mountain of darkness’, it is really easy to get confused and squint-eyed, and to invite demons.

Keep the body straight like a *buddha*. Neither tilt to the left nor to the right, neither forwards nor backwards. Do not lean for support, otherwise you will become sluggish. Sit (*zuò*) comfortably and naturally. Do not be too tense in the shoulders, or the posture cannot be sustained for a long period. Do not try to rush the practice, or it is easily disturbed. The main thing is to hold the energy at the centre.

Breathing through the nose should not be uneven, rushed, suppressed, or obstructed. Keep both inhalation and exhalation soft and gentle. However, do not focus the attention on your breathing.

Once the body is firm and your breathing settled, relax the abdomen and do not think of anything – good or bad. Whenever a thought arises, observe it. When you observe it, it disappears. After a long time, being forgetful of the world (and yourself), you will quite naturally become one continuum (*yīpiàn*). If you attain this, you will naturally become light and clear. This is the true teaching (*fǎmén*) of peace and bliss (*ānlè*).

For those who are already enlightened, it is like a dragon finding water; for those who are not yet enlightened, just go about getting ready – you will certainly not be deceived.

Coming out of meditation (*dīng*), gently move the body and get up quietly. All the time, protect and preserve the inner power that arises from your meditation (*dīng*), like caring for a baby, so that the power of your meditation is not lost. As it is said: “Calm waves are ideal when searching for pearls; in disturbed water it is difficult.” If the water of meditation is clear and calm, the pearl of the mind is automatically revealed.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

Here, “a dragon finding water” means returning to one’s spiritual origin, as a dragon returns to water, its associated element.

Meditation is a personal affair. Thus, master Táng Guāngxīān (C20th) advises against outward show since this flies in the face of self-discipline and is detrimental to the primary concern of inner cultivation:

If you only think about reciting scriptures in front of other people and do not practise inner cultivation and self-control, or if you meditate (*jìngzuò*) all day like a terracotta pot or wooden statue, it may look

good, but it would all be false if you are inwardly and continuously disturbed by random, roaming thoughts.

The false is the robber of truth. If not removed, it destroys the truth. But, to remove it, you must find the right method. If you do not have the right method, it is like shutting the door to catch a robber. The false cannot leave, and the truth will be harmed.

Táng Guāngxiān, Liǎodào mìlù, JH77

In his biography, master Lǐ Qīngyún, who was popularly believed to have been at least 250 years of age when he died in 1933, is quoted as saying that the secret of entering the *dào* of longevity comprises ten methods, of which the first method is seated contemplation (*dǎzuò zhī dào*):

To simply put the body into a dignified posture with the eyes shut is not the true way of meditation (*dǎzuò*). Nevertheless, meditation (*dǎzuò*) in this manner should still be performed twice daily, during two of the six two-hour periods (*i.e.* between 11 p.m. and 1 a.m., and between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.).

Whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, the mind must be as still as a mountain – unmovable and unswayable. The six roots (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, and perception) must be prevented from escaping out and the seven passions (pleasure, anger, sadness, delight, love, hatred, and lust) must not enter within – so as not to disturb the mind.

It is said: “If (you are) wealthy and noble, act according to your position and be without arrogance. If (you are) poor and of low standing, act according to your station and do not engage in flattery.”

There should be no experience in life that is not met with calmness, and there should be no situation in which you are not at ease. When you can be like this, then there is no need to sit absorbed in a state of *chán* (*cānchán*) nor to enter *samādhi*, because at this point you are already a living *buddha* or immortal.

Yáng Sēn, Èrbǎi wúshí suì rénruì shǐjì, ESRR, ILQO p.156

In this section of his biography, written from notes of interviews while he was still alive, Lǐ Qīngyún goes on to discuss a further nine methods or practices that go hand in hand with meditation.

Many Daoist masters have pointed out that meditation or any other facet of spiritual life will not on its own secure spiritual attainment, for “true practice” involves effort in all areas of spiritual life. Master Táng Guāngxiān writes:

True practice is utmost single-minded earnestness. It is not running away from the world and life, nor relying solely on sitting in

meditation (*dǎzuò*) or reciting scriptures. It is refinement to remove the false from within the truth, and it is refinement to reveal the truth from within the false. Then you can understand the true meaning of single-minded earnestness.

Táng Guāngxiān, Liǎodào mìlù, JH77

In his *Fifteen Discourses to Establish the Teachings*, master Wáng Zhé cautions practitioners against reducing meditation to the technique of mere “sitting”. Rather, he says, meditation should be all-pervasive in one’s daily life, with clarity and stillness cultivated throughout the day in all activities and situations, not just at particular times. Meditation (in this broader context) involves stilling one’s mental, emotional, and intellectual turmoil throughout the day in order to establish an emptiness at the core of one’s being – an internal space that can be filled with *qì* (subtle life energy) and *shén* (spirit) at all times, not just when sitting:

Sitting in meditation (*dǎzuò*) does not simply mean to sit with the body erect and the eyes closed. This is superficial sitting. To sit (*zuò*) authentically, you must maintain a mind like Mount Tài, remaining unmovable and unshakable throughout the entire day. (Maintain this practice) whether standing, walking, sitting or lying down, whether in movement or stillness.

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn 7, JY190 3b, DZ1233, HDP8 p.38

He goes on to say that measured, steadfast control over the body and the mind is necessary in order to gain and retain the inner stillness and silence required for the “quiet sitting” that leads to spiritual immortality. This implies constant watch over all thoughts, words and actions, so as to attain true alignment with the immortal *Dào*. Even the slightest intrusion associated with outward activity while sitting will cause the mind to stir:

Restrain and seal the four gates – namely, the eyes, ears, mouth, and nose. Do not allow the external world to enter in. If there is even the slightest trace of a thought about movement and stillness, this cannot be called quiet sitting (*jìngzuò*). If you can practise like this, although your body resides in the world of dust, your name will already be listed in the ranks of the immortals (*xiān*).

Wáng Zhé, Chóngyáng lìjiào shíwǔ lùn 7, JY190 3b, DZ1233, HDP8 p.38

Diligence and paying attention to whatever is being done is required in all aspects of a successful life, spiritual or mundane. Master Mǎ Yù therefore advises practitioners that their daily life should not be regarded as separate from their spiritual practice. Rather, an all-inclusive, whole-life approach to both leads to the best results:

Daily practice involves never deceiving or mocking heaven and earth. Always practise diligently (*jīn*). Cherish every moment. Do not pass the day aimlessly. Decrease your sleep, for this is something desired by ordinary folk. Correct your misdeeds, but not only through seated meditation (*dǎzuò*). Hold the mind still (*dìng*) for long periods of time. Whether walking, standing, sitting or lying down, practise the *Dào*. All of you should cease letting thoughts arise! Quickly discover your (original) nature (*xìng*) and (true spiritual) life (*mìng*). If you can just purify the mind and abandon desires, you will become a celestial immortal. Concern yourself with nothing else and stop entertaining doubts! These are true and proper words. You need to be always clear (*qīng*) and always pure (*jìng*). Practise this diligently (*miǎnlì*).

Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén zhíyán, DZ1234 1a; cf. in CPMS p.184, in TPEQ p.27

In the same discourse, master Mǎ Yù goes on to emphasize that it is misleading to think that spiritual transformation can be attained solely by internal practice. Self-cultivation involves the constant application of both internal and external practices in the effort to attain complete clarity and stillness:

Every day, do not forget the matter of daily practice. Daily practice is of two kinds: daily external practice (*wài rìyòng*) and daily internal practice (*nèi rìyòng*).

Considering daily external practice, you are firmly forbidden to see the faults of others, to boast about your own virtue, to envy the wise and talented, to permit the rise of worldly thoughts, which are the fire of ignorance, to allow feelings of superiority over the masses to arise, to discriminate between self and others or between right and wrong, or to speak of love and hatred.

Considering daily internal practice, give up entertaining thoughts of doubt. Never forget the internal. Whether moving about or standing or sitting, you should keep the mind pure and discard desire. Let nothing burden you or stand in your way. Do not become impure and do not cling. In perfect clarity and perfect purity, move about freely, as you wish. Consistently, throughout the day, contemplate the *Dào* in the same way that a hungry person thinks of food or a thirsty person thinks of drink. If you become aware of the slightest imbalance (in your mind), you must correct it. If you train yourself in this way, you will become a spiritual immortal (*shénxiān*).

*Mǎ Yù, Dānyáng zhēnrén zhíyán, DZ1234 1a, 2a–b;
cf. in CPMS pp.184–85, in TPEQ p.32*

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) adds that spiritual practice does not require complete escape from society. Practising the path “with your feet firmly on the ground” indicates the significance of refining one’s whole being

while leading a normal life. This requires an all-inclusive approach to self-cultivation, combining the practice of meditation with being a good human being. By living in this way, disciples gear their entire life towards the goal of realizing the *Dào*:

The path of true constancy (*cháng*) is not to avoid the world or run away from life, nor to meditate (*jìngzuò*) or stop thoughts. You must tread the path with your feet firmly on the ground (*i.e.* while living in the world), work hard at putting the practice into action, and cultivate refinement within the great furnace of creation. Only then is it real and constant (*cháng*).

Lǐú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

The unknown author of the *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th) similarly advises taking the atmosphere of early morning meditation into all aspects of daily life, and maintaining that atmosphere “without interruption”, whatever the circumstances:

If, during the day, you can keep turning within (*fǎnzhào*, ‘revert the radiance’) while attending to things, remaining completely detached from others and the self, this is reversing the light (*huíguāng*) wherever you are. This is the most sublime aspect of the practice.

It is best to sit in meditation (*jìngzuò*) for one to two hours in the early morning in order to clear away all worldly connections. Practise the method of turning within (*fǎnzhào*) at all times, without interruption, while dealing with affairs and attending to things. Continue the practice for two to three months, and the sages (*zhūzhēn*) in the heavens will surely appear in front of you in affirmation.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 7, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

The cornerstone of Daoist spiritual practice is meditation, the goal being the experience of oneness with the all-pervading and all-sustaining *Dào*. Such experience and attainment is not to be found in the outer world, which is full of distractions and enticements. The Daoist practitioner gains it in the quietude of his inner being. In the *Dàodé jīng*, Lǎozǐ identifies some of the benefits of such meditation:

Without going out of your door,
you can know the whole world;
Without peeping out of your window,
you can see the way (*dào*) of heaven.
The further you travel,
the less you know.

Therefore, the sage
 knows without travelling,
 understands without seeing,
 accomplishes without doing.

Dàodé jīng 47

Here, the “door” symbolizes the body’s openings or sense organs such as the nose, mouth, ears, *etc.* The “window” similarly symbolizes the physical eyes. “The further you travel” represents the scattering of a person’s thoughts and attention into the external world. It also implies that the more you know, the more you realize how little you know. Remaining inwardly still, in one place, all attention withdrawn from the senses, the true sage knows and understands everything within himself. Likewise:

The five colours blind the eyes of man;
 The five musical notes deafen the ears of man;
 The five flavours dull the taste of man;
 Horse racing, hunting, and chasing (after things)
 (all) madden the mind of man;
 Rare and valuable goods keep their owners awake at night.

Therefore, the sage (*shèngrén*):
 provides for the belly (*i.e.* the inner being)
 and not for the eye (*i.e.* the senses).
 He accepts the one and rejects the other.

Dàodé jīng 12; cf. WLT p.90

The mind, which is fond of colours, sounds, tastes and sensations, seeks fulfilment through pursuing and acquiring objects – all to no avail. In meditation, the attention of the mind is to be withdrawn from these objects and focused within. The sage withdraws the attention from the senses and focuses it on the inner self.

The process of stilling the mind and achieving communion with the *Dào* cannot be accomplished quickly. It is a long and arduous process, relying on a process of daily incremental steps to achieve concentration. The *Dàodé jīng* suggests adopting such an approach towards the accomplishment of great tasks:

Regard the small as great,
 regard the few as many.
 Manage the difficult while they are easy,
 manage the great while they are small.
 All difficult things start from the easy,
 all great things in the world start from the small.

The tree that fills a man's arms
 arises from a tender shoot;
 A nine-storey tower
 is raised from a heap of earth;
 A thousand miles' journey
 begins from the ground beneath your feet.

Dàodé jīng 64; cf. TTCT p.78

See also: **meditation (Daoism)**.

1. See Louis Komjathy, *Daoist Tradition*, DTK pp.12–13.

deliberation A term sometimes used in translation where the context suggests that 'meditation', as spiritual practice, would make better sense. See **meditation**.

devatānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of deities (*devatā*) or celestial beings. See **anussati**.

devatā yoga (S), **lha'i rnal 'byor** (T) *Lit.* deity (*devatā*, *lha'i*) yoga (*rnal 'byor*); a tantric Buddhist practice involving visualization of a particular deity, especially one's chosen or personal deity (*ishṭa-devatā*), who may be regarded as an object of worship (*devatā pūjā*) or as an ideal with whom to identify in the attempt to imbibe and manifest the presumed attributes of that deity. The deity, often a celestial *buddha* or *bodhisattva*, is visualized to the accompaniment of offerings, prayers and the recitation of *mantras*, together with rituals and the use of *maṇḍalas*. The practitioner may consider himself to be either in the presence of the deity or to be the deity. *Devatā yoga* is an essential aspect of *utpatti-krama* (T. *bskyed rim*) and *nishpanna-krama*, which are the initial and the completion stages of spiritual transformation in *anuttara-yoga tantra*.

See also: **nishpanna-krama**, **pūjā** (8.4), **utpatti-krama**, **Vajrayāna** (►4).

dhammānupassanā (Pa), **dharmānupashyanā** (S) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of things (*dhammas*); contemplation of mental objects (*dhammas*) or mental things and processes; the fourth of the four foundations of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*). See **satipaṭṭhāna**.

dhammānussati (Pa) *Lit.* recollection (*anussati*) of the *Dhamma*. See **anussati**.

dhāraṇā (S/H), **dhārṇā** (H/Pu) *Lit.* holding on to, possessing, retaining; from the root *dhṛi* (S. to hold, to maintain); hence, fixity of purpose, resolution, determination; fixing something in the mind, fixing the mind on one thing; holding in memory, mental retention, memorizing; focused effort to achieve something; spiritually, inner concentration in meditation; specifically, holding the breath at particular bodily centres (*chakras*) in the practice of *haṭha yoga* and *prāṇāyāma*.

In Jain theory of knowledge and perception, *dhāraṇā* is the fourth step in the acquisition of sense knowledge.¹ Firstly, there is *avagraha*, the perception itself. Most of what is seen and heard, and so on, is ignored, and fails to register. In some instances, this is followed by *īhā* (wanting to know) – curiosity, speculation, discrimination, an interest in knowing more about something perceived by the senses. Then there is *avāya* (confirmation) – getting to know more, an enquiry into whatever it is that has attracted the attention. Finally, there is *dhāraṇā*, in which the details of the matter are grasped and become fixed in the memory.

There is a significant difference between concentration as it is generally understood and concentration in meditation. Concentration is commonly taken to imply focus on the work in hand. This implies that the mind, though focused, continues to move and to occupy itself with the task before it. *Dhāraṇā*, on the other hand, in the sense of inner concentration in meditation, involves complete stillness of the mind. This is no mean task, and many practitioners of *yoga* struggle for many years with the distractions of the mind, many giving up the struggle in despair of ever achieving success.

It is this kind of concentration and stillness of mind and soul to which Indian mystical and yogic texts refer. Sadānanda and Shankara provide similar definitions:

Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) means fixing the mind on *Brahman*, the One without a second.

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 206; cf. VSY p.113

The steadiness of the mind through realization of *Brahman* ... – that alone is known as the highest *dhāraṇā*.

Shankara, Aparokṣhānubhūti 122; cf. SRSS p.66

The *Bhagavad Gītā* counsels drawing all consciousness to the head by concentration on the repetition of *Aum* for, by this kind of *dhāraṇā*, the soul is able to leave the body:

He who closes all the doors of the body,
confining the mind to its centre (*hṛid*, heart),
drawing all the vital energy of the soul (*ātman*) into the head –
He establishes himself in yogic concentration (*yoga dhāraṇā*).

Repeating the single syllable *Aum*, denoting *Brahman*,
remembering Me, and abandoning the body,
he leaves (the body) and reaches the highest state.

Bhagavad Gītā 8:12–13

More recent Indian mystics have also used *dhārṇā* as a general term for concentration in meditation:

He is a *sādhū* who strives within himself.
Relinquishing laziness, discussion and dispute,
he earnestly practises *dhārṇā* – a very difficult state.
He gives up agitation, insulting language, and slander.

Sahajobāi, Bānī, Sādh lakshan, Chaupāi 21, *SBB* p.13

Come, live at the eye (*nainan*, i.e. eye centre):
experience oneness here through concentration.
Here duality is transcended:
fix (*dhārṇā*) your attention in the inner light.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:18.11–12,

SBP p.152, in *SD2* p.304

Dhāraṇā, as firm control of the senses, is also advocated by the *Kaṭha Upanishad*:

When the five means of perception (*pañcha-jñānāni*),
together with the mind, become still,
and when the intellect itself stirs not –
That, they say, is the highest state.

This unwavering control of the senses (*indriya dhāraṇā*)
is known as *yoga*.

Then one becomes vigilant:
for *yoga* can be gained and lost.

Kaṭha Upanishad 2:3.10–11

Dhāraṇā is the first of the three internal, meditational aspects of the eight-part (*aṣṭ-āṅga*) *yoga*, as described by Patañjali in his *Yoga Sūtras*:

Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) is confining the mind (*chitta*) to one place.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:1

In Patañjali's description, *dhāraṇā* is preceded by *pratyāhāra*, the withdrawal of the mind from the senses, which is a prerequisite for internal concentration. When the mind learns to concentrate, Patañjali continues, then it develops the

capacity for visualization or contemplation (*dhyāna*), leading ultimately to absorption (*samādhi*). When *pratyāhāra*, *dhāraṇā* and *samādhi* all combine, then the result is *saṁyama* (a state of complete self-mastery):

When these three (*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*) come together,
there is *saṁyama*.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:4

Through the practice of *prāṇāyāma*, says Patañjali, the coverings over the inner light are destroyed and true *dhāraṇā* becomes possible:

From this (*prāṇāyāma*),
the coverings over the light are destroyed,
and the mind becomes fit for concentration (*dhāraṇā*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:52–53

Patañjali lists eight primary aspects (*aṣṭ-anga*, eight limbs) in the practice of *yoga*, a refrain that has been echoed, with variations, down the centuries. The *Tejobindu Upanishad* lists fifteen aspects,² of which *dhāraṇā* comes before *ātmadhyāna* (contemplation of the self, self-realization) and *samādhi*. Of *dhāraṇā*, it says:

The state of abstraction attained by the mind, when it sees *Brahman* wherever it goes, is known as the supreme *dhāraṇā*.

Tejobindu Upanishad 1:35; cf. YU p.33

Dhāraṇā, says the *Kshurikā Upanishad*, which speaks of the eightfold (*aṣṭāṅga*) *yoga*, is a knife (*kshurikā*) “for the proper attainment of *yoga*”, by which the bonds of ignorance and illusion are cut asunder.³ Some texts list only six primary aspects, but *dhāraṇā* remains one of them:⁴

The rule for effecting this (oneness) is: control of the breath (*prāṇāyāma*), withdrawal of the senses (*pratyāhāra*), meditation (*dhyāna*), concentration (*dhāraṇā*), contemplative enquiry (*tarka*), and absorption (*samādhi*). This is known as the sixfold *yoga*.

Maitrī Upanishad 6:18

The *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* lists the same six, adding:

When a wise man merges (his mind) into his *ātman* (self), and becomes absorbed in contemplation (*dhārayitvā*) of the supreme Self, that is known as *dhāraṇā*.

Amṛitanāda Upanishad 14; cf. YU p.12

In *haṭha yoga*, which lays emphasis on *āsanas* (physical postures) and *prāṇāyāma* (control of the *prāṇas* or subtle life energies), *dhāraṇā* is understood to involve concentration or holding of the *prāṇas* at the various bodily *chakras* for a particular period of time, thereby bringing the *prāṇa* and active *tattva* of that centre under conscious control. This practice is known collectively as the five *dhāraṇās*, mentioned in a number of texts that deal with *aṣṭāṅga yoga*.⁵ For instance, if – by focusing the attention, by adopting certain postures, and by control of the breathing – the *prāṇas* can be held at the *mūlādhāra chakra* (the rectum centre) for about two hours, then the *prithvī* (earth) *tattva* will be conquered. Likewise, for each of the other *chakras*: at the genital *chakra*, the *jala* or *pānī* (water) *tattva*; at the navel *chakra*, the *agnī* or *tejas* (fire) *tattva*; at the heart *chakra*, the *vāyu* or *pavana* (air) *tattva*; and at the throat *chakra*, the *ākāsha* (ether) *tattva*. The *Śhiva Saṃhitā* says:

Let the great *yogī* practise the five-fold *dhāraṇā* forms of concentration on *Vishṇu* (God), through which command over the five *tattvas* is obtained, and the fear of injury from any of them is removed.

Let the wise *yogī* practise *dhāraṇā* thus: five *ghaṭikās* (two hours) in the *ādhāra* lotus (*mūlādhāra chakra*); five *ghaṭikās* in the seat of the *linga* (*svādhishṭhāna chakra*); five *ghaṭikās* in the region above it (the *maṇipūraka chakra*) and the same in the heart (*anāhata chakra*); five *ghaṭikās* in the throat (*viśuddha chakra*); and lastly let him hold *dhāraṇā* for five *ghaṭikās* in the space between the two eyebrows (*ājñā chakra*). By this practice the elements cease to cause harm to the great *yogī*.

The wise *yogī*, who thus continually practises concentration (*dhāraṇā*), never dies through hundreds of cycles of the great *Brahmā*.

Śhiva Saṃhitā 3:63–65; cf. SSV p.34

The sixth *chakra*, between the eyebrows, is known as the eye centre or third eye, and is the point of control over the five lower *chakras*.

See also: **asṭāṅga yoga**, **haṭha yoga**.

1. See e.g. Āchārya Umāswāmī, *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 1:15.
2. *Tejobindu Upanishad* 1:15–16.
3. *Kshurikā Upanishad* 1, 21, YU pp.22, 26.
4. E.g. also *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 41.
5. E.g. *Darshana Upanishad* 1:4–5, 8:1–9; *Yogatattva Upanishad* 84–104; *Yogashikhā Upanishad* 5:46–55, YU pp.380–82; *Varāha Upanishad* 5:11–12; *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 9:1, YU pp.482–83.

dhāraṇī (S), **gzungs** (T), **tuó luó ní, zǒngchí, zhòu** (C), **darani, sōji** (J) *Lit.* retention (*dhāraṇī*); mnemonic device or code; verse, litany, hymn; incantation,

magic formula, charm, spell, talisman; from the same root *dhṛi* (S. to hold, to maintain, to support, to preserve) as *dhāraṇā* (fixity, concentration); implies the retention of meaning as well as mindfulness and concentration; often used synonymously with *mantra*.

Although popularly known for their extensive use in tantric rituals and practices, *dhāraṇīs* and *mantras* are also common in *Mahāyāna* texts. Indeed, their pre-*Mahāyāna* and pre-tantric use is demonstrated by a collection of *dhāraṇīs* in the *Vidyādhara Piṭaka* or *Dhāraṇī Piṭaka*, variously attributed either to the Indian *Dharmaguptaka* (c.C3rd–C2nd BCE) or to the earlier *Mahāsāṃghika* school. The latter is generally reckoned to have been the first major split from the *Theravāda* school, probably around a century after the Buddha's death. *Dhāraṇīs* are prevalent throughout the Buddhist world, except in the *Theravāda* tradition.

Four categories of *dhāraṇī* are identified in early *Mahāyāna* Buddhism: *dharma-dhāraṇī* (retention of teachings), *artha-dhāraṇī* (retention of meaning), *mantra-dhāraṇī* (retention of a *mantra*), and *kshānti-dhāraṇī* (retention of forbearance). The purpose of *dharma-dhāraṇīs* and *artha-dhāraṇīs* is to recall the teachings. Such *dhāraṇīs* are effectively mnemonic devices for memorizing doctrine, often as a summary of the far longer *sūtras* in which they are found. Some *Mahāyāna sūtras*, for example, end with a brief synopsis of the teachings or with a string of words or letters, each recalling a particular term or subject that is covered in the *sūtra*. The merit accruing from the recitation of such a *dhāraṇī* is generally reckoned to be the same as reciting the entire *sūtra*.

Mantra-dhāraṇīs are repeated as a means of controlling the mind or when facing adversity; *kshānti-dhāraṇīs* are intended to give courage and fortitude to face the world. In tantric Buddhism, while *mantras* can be short and may consist of etymologically meaningless sounds or syllables (*bīja-mantras*, seed *mantras*), *dhāraṇīs* are usually longer and are more likely to possess meaning.¹

There are a number of *dhāraṇī* collections among Buddhist schools; and the many Buddhist celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and other deities have their own *dhāraṇīs*. They are used for a wide variety of ritual, superstitious and meditational purposes, including: the invocation of celestial *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas*, and benevolent spirits; protection and rescue from adversity, danger, and evil spirits; the bringing of rain; the increase of wisdom; reversing the effects of bad *karma*; the healing of various diseases; the cure of snake bites; the assurance of being reborn in favourable circumstances; bringing harmony to the family; the elimination of mundane problems and obstacles; the invoking of blessings; assurance of rebirth in the pure lands (heavenly realms) after death; and so on. A *dhāraṇī* may advocate its own recitation, and promise many benefits as reward. Such texts clearly pander to the natural human desire to find comfort and happiness and to avoid misfortune, both in this life and hereafter, as well as providing inspiration for more determined practice.

Dhāraṇīs are of varying length – some long, some short. Some relate stories of how certain people were protected by its recitation. The Chinese *Ānzhái tuóluónízhòu jīng* (‘*Dhāraṇī*-Spell Scripture for Pacifying Homes’),² for instance, tells the apocryphal story of the sons of a merchant who complain to the Buddha about the unending series of problems that beset their home and family. The Buddha therefore goes to the house and reprimands the spirits who have neglected to take care of the family. At the same time, he explains how to prepare a feast for bringing peace to a home. This is a standard kind of ritual, using incense, lighted lamps, and the chanting of a similar *sūtra*, the *Ānzhái shénzhòu jīng* (‘Spirit-Spell Scripture for Pacifying Homes’).³ Although the text claims to be a translation from the Sanskrit, there is no evidence for the existence of such a text, and it is probably an original Chinese composition.⁴

In East Asian tantric Buddhism, three *dhāraṇīs* receive particular attention: the *Buddha-Head* (J. *Butchō Sonshō*; S. *Ushñīṣa Vijaya*), the *Great Compassion* (J. *Daihiṣhin*; C. *Dàbēi Zhòu*; S. *Nīlakaṇṭha*), and the *Treasure-Box Seal* (J. *Hōkyōin*; S. *Karaṇḍa-mudrā*). These are embedded within longer *sūtras*, which extol their merits, advise on their recitation, and so forth.

The *Great Compassion Dhāraṇī* is used especially as a part of standard monastic liturgies and at funerals. There are at least eight Chinese versions of this *dhāraṇī*, which is contained in the *Qiānshǒu jīng* (‘Thousand Hands *Sūtra*’),⁵ and invokes the help of the thousand-armed celestial *bodhisattva* Avalokiteśvara (C. *Guānyīn*). A popular version of the *dhāraṇī*, translated by Bhagavaddharma (c.700), maintains that its recitation will ensure rebirth in fifteen pleasant circumstances (good country, peaceful times, prosperity, good friends, protection by the gods, *etc.*) and avoidance of fifteen forms of painful death (starvation, insanity, drowning, burning, poison, suicide, *etc.*). According to Bhagavaddharma’s version, Avalokiteśvara is said to have received the *dhāraṇī* from a celestial *buddha*. Having made his ten *bodhisattva* vows to help sentient beings, he was endowed with a thousand arms and a thousand eyes.⁶

See also: **mantra**.

1. See “dhāraṇī,” *Oxford Dictionary of Buddhism*, ODB; “bīja,” “dhāraṇī,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. *Ānzhái tuóluónízhòu jīng*, T21 1394.
3. *Ānzhái shénzhòu jīng*, T19 1029.
4. See “Anzhai shenzhou jing,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
5. *Qiānshǒu jīng*, T20 1029.
6. See “Qianshou jing,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.

dharmamudrā (S), **chos kyi phyag rgya** (T), **fǎ yìn** (C) *Lit.* seal (*mudrā*, *phyag rgya*, *yìn*) of doctrine (*dharma*, *chos kyi*, *fǎ*); in Tibetan Buddhism, one of

the four seals of *anuttara-yoga tantra*; in other Buddhist traditions, the three marks or seals that distinguish Buddhist teachings from non-Buddhist, viz. *anitya* (impermanence of all things), *anātman* (lack of a permanent individuality or self) and *nirvāṇa* (ultimate Reality) or, in other instances, *dukkha* (suffering as a characteristic of all life experience). See **mahāmudrā**.

dhātu-vavatthāna, dhātu-manasikāra (Pa) *Lit.* definition (*vavatthāna*) or consideration (*manasikāra*) of the elements (*dhātu*); analysis of the elements, resolution into the elements; reflection or meditation upon the elements; determining or defining the four (*catu*) primary elements or elemental constituents that are traditionally said to comprise the physical body; also as *catu-dhātu-vavatthāna*; a subject (*kammaṭṭhāna*) of Buddhist meditation practice, especially as the elements that comprise the body; a term used in the analytical texts of the *Abhidhamma* and explained in detail in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ('Path of Purification'), although the subject matter itself is present in the Pali *suttas* (discourses of the Buddha); the fifth of the six practices comprising *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body).

In more modern terms, the four 'elements' that are made the subject of meditation can be understood as the principal modes in which matter manifests. They are:¹

Earth (*paṭhavī*). The element of solidity, manifesting most obviously in the body as bones, flesh, teeth, sinews, heart, kidneys, *etc.*

Water (*āpa*). The element of fluidity and cohesion, manifesting most obviously in the body as blood, urine, lymph, bile, sweat, tears, *etc.*

Fire (*teja*). The element of heat or fire, whereby whatever is eaten, drunk or chewed is completely digested and generates bodily warmth.

Air (*vāyu*). The element of wind or air, manifesting most obviously in respiration, and wind in the bowels and stomach.

The *dhātu-vavatthāna* make up the last four of forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*) listed in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the Pali *suttas*) and discussed at length by Buddhaghosa in his *Visuddhimagga*. It is characteristic of human beings to identify with their mind and body. The intention behind taking the *dhātu-vavatthāna* as a meditation subject is to lead to the realization that the body cannot be understood as one's self. By mentally dissecting the body into its various constituents, breaking these down further into the four primary elements, noting that these elements behave in the same manner whether in the body or the external world, observing the constant flux of bodily processes, and realizing that the parts contain nothing in them

that can be identified as ‘I’, the meditator comes to understand that the body as a whole contains nothing that can be realistically regarded as the ‘self’. Realizing this, the tendency to cling to the body, feel pride in it and so on, is significantly reduced. This detachment from the body leads to an enhanced awareness of one’s inner being, which is where meditation really begins.

The Pali *suttas* approach this kind of reflection or meditation in two ways. The four elements, together with the element (*dhātu*) of space (*ākāsa-dhātu*) and the sixth ‘element’ of consciousness (*viññāṇa-dhātu*), can be considered and analysed in either a general or a more detailed manner. The *Dhātuvibhanga Sutta* (‘Discourse on an Analysis of the Elements’)² takes the detailed approach, listing everything that comprises a human being and going on to analyse in greater detail the five elements of which the body consists. Of the earth element, it says:

The earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*) may be either internal or external. What is the internal earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*)? Whatever internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and clung to – that is, head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, intestines, mesentery, stomach contents, faeces or whatever else internally, belonging to oneself, is solid, solidified, and clung to: this is called the internal earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*).

Now both the internal earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*) and the external earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*) are simply earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*). And that should be seen as it actually is with proper wisdom thus: “This is not mine; this I am not; this is not my self.” When one sees it thus, as it actually is, with proper wisdom, one becomes disenchanted with the earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*) and makes the mind (*citta*) dispassionate towards the earth element (*paṭhavī-dhātu*).

*Majjhima Nikāya 140, Dhātuvibhanga Sutta,
PTSM3 pp.239–40; cf. MDBB pp.1088–89*

The text then repeats for each of the other four elements. Space is said to be exemplified by the body’s various cavities – “the holes of the ears, the nostrils, the mouth”, and any other spaces.

According to the Buddhist teaching of *anattā* (not-self), there is no permanent, independent self. What is regarded as the self and what passes from body to body in the cycle of *samsāra* is an amalgamation of aggregates (*khandhas*), which are in constant flux. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the Buddha explains how the physical body is mistakenly understood as a single entity by using the example of a butcher and a cow. Only after slaughtering a cow and cutting it into pieces to sell it does the butcher stop thinking about the

cow as an entity called a ‘cow’, and start to think about it in terms of the elements constituting what used to be a cow. In the same way, by meditating on the bodily elements, a meditator realizes that the body is comprised of constantly changing material elements and ceases to think of it as something unique with which he can identify:³

Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at the crossroads with it cut up into pieces, so too, a *bhikkhu* reviews this same body, . . . as consisting of the elements thus: “In this body there is the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element.” In this way he abides contemplating the body as a body internally, externally, and both internally and externally. . . . And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

Majjhima Nikāya 10, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSM1 p.58; cf. MDBB p.148

The *Abhidhamma* texts elaborate considerably on these basic instructions given in the Pali *suttas*. Discussing this elaboration, Buddhaghosa details multiple ways in which a meditator can give his attention to analysis of the four elements. These methods include consideration of their characteristics, their origins, the parts of the body representing each individual element, and so on. He also says that meditation on the *dhātu-vavatthānas* is suitable for people of slow understanding and leads only to threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), which is close to that of the first *jhāna*. Meditation on the *dhātu-vavatthānas*, he adds, does not lead into the *jhānas* because of the personal aspects inherent in this form of meditation.⁴

See also: **dhātu** (►1).

1. Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Noble Eightfold Path*, WH308 pp.45–46.
2. See also e.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 28 (*Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*), 62 (*Mahārā-hulovāda Sutta*), PTSM1 pp.185–89, 421–23.
3. See also *Dīgha Nikāya* 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, PTSD2 p.294; Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 11:28–30, PTSV pp.347–48.
4. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 11:42–119, PTSV pp.352–71.

dhauti-karma, dhauti-kriyā (S/H) *Lit.* cleansing (*dhauti*) practice (*karma, kriyā*); one of the six preliminary cleansing practices of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

dhikr (A), **ẓikr** (P) *Lit.* remembrance, recollection, memory, mention; repetition, recitation; invocation, prayer; meditation; discourse; from *dhakara* (to

remember, to bear in mind, to recall, to recollect); used more or less synonymously with *yād* (remembrance, recollection, memory, repetition); the remembrance of God (*dhikr Allāh*); the repetition of the names of *Allāh*, or a refrain in praise of *Allāh*, or a verse from the *Qur'ān*; the umbrella term under which the majority of the spiritual practices of Sufism are grouped; includes all practices from verbal repetition (with or without music, movement, chanting, or dance) to silent mental repetition with the attention fixed at various points within the body, to the higher remembrance or 'repetition' of the divine Name of God, that is, listening to divine music within. The group practice of *dhikr* is also called a *dhikr*. Regular Sufi meetings, as well as ceremonies associated with births, marriages, circumcisions and the celebrations in honour of the birthday of a saint, generally include a communal *dhikr*, sometimes performed in a mosque by bands of Sufis.

Also, using a verb from the same root as *dhikr*, the *Qur'ān* repeatedly calls upon human beings to remember (*udhkur*) God:

Remember (*udhkur*) the Lord in your soul,
with humility and in reverence,
without loudness in words, in the mornings and evenings;
Be not of those who are unheedful (*ghāfilūn*).

Qur'ān 7:205; cf. AYA

Remember (*udhkur*) the name of your Lord,
and devote yourself to Him wholeheartedly.

Qur'ān 73:8; cf. AYA

And remember (*udhkur*) the name of your Lord,
morning and evening;
And part of the night, prostrate yourself to Him;
And glorify Him the long night through.

Qur'ān 76:25–26; cf. AYA

Remembrance (*dhikr*) of God is the greatest.

Qur'ān 29:45, AYA

So remember (*udhkur*) Me,
and I (God) will remember (*udhkur*) you.

Qur'ān 2:152; cf. AYA

The *Qur'ān* briefly covers many aspects of the practice of *dhikr*. In the verse following the well-known 'light verse', which describes God as the light of the heavens and the earth, it says that the divine light dwells in those homes where God is remembered "by men whom neither merchandise nor selling can

divert from the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God”.¹ This highlights the purpose of *dhikr*: to divert thoughts from the multitudinous scattering thoughts of all that is other than God. The *Qur’ān* continues:

Their only fear is for the day when hearts and eyes will be transformed,
that God may reward them according to the best of their deeds, and
even more for them out of His grace, for God provides for those whom
He will, without measure.

Qur’ān 24:37–38; cf. AYA

That is, those with whom the light dwells are not concerned with anything of this world. Their only concern is for the day when their inner beings will expand and their spiritual eyes be opened. This happens as a “reward” for the “best of their deeds” – that is, *dhikr*, the constant, unceasing remembrance of God. But this “reward” – of drawing the devoted practitioner of *dhikr* towards God – is more the result of “grace . . . without measure” than of unaided human effort, since striving for God bears fruit only as a result of divine grace. The *Qur’ān* therefore counsels the seeker to turn to the “remembrance (*dhikr*) of *Allāh*”, for therein lies peace or “rest”:

Allāh sends astray whom He will,
and guides to Himself all who turn to Him,
who have believed and whose hearts have rest
in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of *Allāh*.
Verily, in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of *Allāh* do hearts find rest!

Qur’ān 13:27–28; cf. MGK

Conversely, the times when remembrance of God is absent from the mind are times of difficulty; for in those moments when the devotee is not engaged in *dhikr*, he is laying himself open to the entry of negative thoughts:

If anyone withdraws himself from remembrance (*dhikr*) of (God)
Most Gracious, we appoint for him an evil one, to be an intimate
companion to him.

Qur’ān 43:36, AYA

It is not only the *Qur’ān* that has so many injunctions and encouraging passages concerning the practice of *dhikr*. There are also many *ḥadīth* (traditional sayings and stories associated with the Prophet) that enlarge and expand upon the same themes:

Whenever people sit and remember (*dhikr*) God, they are surrounded
by angels who cover them with God’s favour, and peace descends

upon them; and God remembers (*dhikr*) them in that assembly which is near Him. . . .

‘Abd Allāh ibn Aws said: “An Arab came to the Prophet and asked, . . . ‘O Prophet! which is the best of actions and the most rewarded?’

“He said, ‘The best of actions is this, that you detach yourself from the world, and die while your tongue is moist with repetition (*dhikr*) of the name of God.’”

Ḥadīth, in “ẓikr,” DOI pp.708–9

For everything, there is a polish that takes away rust:

and the polish of the heart is remembrance (*dhikr*) of God.

Ḥadīth; cf. in SMAS (184)p.78

This world is under a curse and everything in it,

except for the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God.

Ḥadīth, in “al-Ḥiss,” CEI p.158

There is no question, then, that *dhikr* is recommended as part of traditional Islam. But *dhikr* is not just one practice. It is any practice that entails a period of constant remembrance or constant thinking of God. From a Sufi perspective, this covers a broad spectrum of practices. The term is used loosely, for example, for the ceremonial practices that surround some Sufi meetings. These ceremonies, often specific to particular Sufi orders, have sometimes been performed in public, particularly in Egypt during the nineteenth century, and can reflect the history and traditions of the particular Sufi order.

As a mystical practice, however, *dhikr* is more narrowly defined. It is the repetition or constant recollection of a name or names of God, or a phrase associated with God, often a verse from the *Qur’ān*. In essence, *dhikr* is a process of concentration of the mind.

The two fundamental forms of *dhikr* are therefore *dhikr jalī* and *dhikr khafī*. *Dhikr jalī* (manifest, outwardly perceptible) is recited aloud and may be accompanied by music and dancing, as among the *Chishtīyah* and *Qādirīyah* Sufis. *Dhikr khafī* (hidden, secret, silent) is recited very quietly or is repeated silently in the mind. The purpose of both forms is to elevate the consciousness within – the outward repetition with the tongue leading towards inner concentration and remembrance of God. Ni‘mat Allāh Valī accepts that *dhikr* begins as an “external” practice, but emphasizes that the goal is internal. He also reiterates the Sufi dictum that the purpose of *dhikr* is to become aware that man’s remembrance of God stems from God’s remembrance of man:

To begin with, remembrance (*ẓikr*) is external, but the goal is to become aware of God’s remembrance (*ẓikr*) of us and to become

liberated from our own remembrance (*ẓikr*) of Him. Here, annihilation (*fanā*) in the Remembered (*maẓkūr*) of the one who remembers takes place. Then God becomes the Remembered (*Maẓkūr*), the remembrance (*ẓikr*), and the one who remembers.

Shāh Nī'mat Allāh Valī, Rasā'il, RNV4 p.177; cf. in SSE9 p.22

Other Sufis, however, have seen no advantage in external, spoken *dhikr*. Putting the matter succinctly, Hujwīrī quotes a Sufi saying:

Remembrance on the tongue (*dhikr al-lisān*) is heedlessness (*ghaflah*), while remembrance in the heart (*dhikr al-qalb*) is nearness (*qurb*) (to God).

Sufi Saying, in Kashf al-Mahjūb XIV, KMM p.245, in SSE7 p.158

It is because most practitioners find purely mental *dhikr* to be so difficult that some Sufis have taken to repeating the words audibly, in order to try and hold the mind to the repetition. It is much easier to sing and dance than to sit quietly in a solitary corner and wrestle with one's own thoughts. The problem is that whether the *dhikr* is repeated vocally or mentally, the mind keeps on running back into the grooves or habits of thought to which it is accustomed. Nonetheless, one way or another, inner peace can only be attained through habitual inner control of the mind, and – in Sufism – this means *dhikr*. Rūmī is speaking of the wayward nature of the mind when he likens *dhikr* to the safety of water into which a “naked man” jumps in order to escape from the “hornets” of his uncontrolled thoughts:

It is like a naked man who jumped into the water,
that in the water he might escape from the sting of the hornets;
The hornets are circling above him,
and when he puts out his head, they do not spare him.
The water is recollection (*ẓikr*) of God,
and the hornet is the remembrance (*yād*), during this time,
of such-and-such a woman or such-and-such a man.
Hold your breath in the water of recollection (*ẓikr*) and show fortitude
that you may be freed from the old thought and temptation.
After that, you yourself will assume
the nature of that pure water entirely from head to foot.
As the noxious hornet flees from the water,
so will it be afraid of you.
After that, be far from the water, if you wish,
for in your inmost soul
you are of the same nature as the water, O fellow servant.

Rūmī, Maṣnavī IV:435–41; cf. MJR4 p.296

Many Sufis writers have been systematizers, and a number have categorized the various types of *dhikr*, each in his own manner. Anṣārī mentions “three kinds” of *dhikr*:

Remembrance (*dhikr*) is of three kinds:

1. External (*ẓāhir*), consisting of prayers, praise, and observances.
2. Internal (*khafī*), which involves freedom from laziness, remaining in contemplation, and persisting in silent nightly prayer.
3. True (*ḥaqīqī*), which is the witnessing (*mushāhadah*) of God’s remembrance (*dhikr*), involving liberation from the consciousness of remembrance (*dhikr*), and becoming aware that anyone who is conscious of his own remembrance is a liar (*muftarī*).

Anṣārī, Manāzil al-Sā’rīn 67, MSA pp.148–49; cf. in SSE9 p.24

“Witnessing (*mushāhadah*)” implies contemplation and awareness, while “God’s remembrance” refers to the state in which the lover realizes that his remembrance of God is really God’s remembrance of him. Anṣārī also depicts the three categories in another manner:

Remembrance (*ẓikr*) is of three kinds: remembrance by the tongue (*ẓikr ba lisān*), remembrance of the heart (*ẓikr ba janān*), and remembrance of the soul (*ẓikr ba jān*).

Remembrance (*ẓikr*) by the tongue is done out of habit; that of the heart (*janān*) is worship (*‘ibādat*); while that of the soul (*jān*) is a sign of bliss.

One who is in the world of bodies (*‘ālam-i jism*) engages in remembrance (*ẓikr*) out of habit; one who is in the world of Attributes (*Ṣifāt*) engages in remembrance (*ẓikr*) with worship (*‘ibādat*); and he who is immersed in the Essence, his remembrance (*yād*) is in the soul.

Anṣārī, Rasā’il, RJA pp.108–9; cf. in SSE9 p.25

Rūzbihān writes in a similar vein:

Remembrance (*dhikr*) with the tongue is for ordinary people; remembrance (*dhikr*) with the heart is for the elect, being the first result of love (*maḥabbah*). It happens when the heart acquires inner vision (*baṣar*) through the witnessing (*mushāhadah*) of God’s Attributes and, stirred by lovingkindness within, finds tranquillity in intimacy, leading to peace....

Nūrī said: “Remembrance (*dhikr*) is the annihilation (*fanā*) of the one who remembers (*dhākir*) in the Remembered (*Madhkūr*).”

Al-ʿĀrif (the gnostic, al-Ḥallāj) said: “Remembrance (*dhikr*) is a light struck from the manifestation of God, to attract the hearts of mystics (*ʿārifīn*) towards the purity of His love.”

Rūzbiḥān, Mashrab al-Arwāḥ 8:6, *MARB* p.150; cf. in *SSE9* p.26

Nasafī describes four major types or levels of *dhikr*, each based on the condition of the seeker: whether he is “willing”, “devoted”, having “affection”, or having “love”:

You who are dear to God in both worlds know that those who practise remembrance (*ẓākirān*) belong to four levels: some are willing, some devoted, some have affection, and some love. Anyone among the *ṣūfīs* who ascends inwardly high belongs to the fourth level.

Now I will explain these levels to you in greater detail. At the first level, the repeater is apparently in solitude and repeats the names with the tongue, but his heart is in the marketplace buying and selling! This kind of remembrance (*ẓikr*) has not much result, but is not without some benefit either. At the next level, he performs remembrance (*ẓikr*) and his heart wanders, but he brings it back by exertion. The majority of remembrance (*ẓākirān*) belongs to this category.

At the third level, remembrance (*ẓikr*) pervades the whole heart, and he cannot but repeat the names. If he has to attend to some external matter, he does so with effort. This level is the converse of the second one, and it is the level of nearness. Not very many reach this level, and only one who has a beloved (spiritual master) can understand its meaning. One in love always likes to talk about his beloved, and likes others also to talk and praise his beloved.

At the fourth level, the one for whom the remembrance (*maẓkūr*) is practised pervades the heart. It is similar to the third level, the distinction being the difference between the name of the beloved and the beloved himself. At this level, the beloved himself pervades the heart.

O dervish, there are times when a lover forgets even the names of the beloved. Rather, he forgets everything except the beloved. So the first level is the level of willingness; second, devotion; third, affection; and fourth, love. When someone seeks association with another, it is attraction (*mayl*). When there is great desire, it is devotion (*irādat*). When devotion increases and becomes extreme, it is love (*maḥabbat*); and when love increases and grows yet further, it is called intense love (*ʿishq*).

O dervish, if such a dear traveller comes to you as your guest, hold him dear. Empty out the house of your heart for love; love cannot shine in partnership. If you empty not your heart, love will.

Love has come and is as blood in my skin and veins.
It made me empty of me, but filled me with the Friend.
Now every particle of my existence is pervaded by him;
Nay, all that remains of me is a name,
everything is my Friend.

Nasafī, al-Insān al-Kāmil 7:1.2–10, IK pp.112–14

Various names are commonly ascribed to the different forms and levels of *dhikr*. Some are named according to the particular phrase, words, formula or verse from the *Qur'ān* that is repeated. *Dhikr āyat al-kursī*, for instance, means the '*dhikr* of the verse of the throne'.² Other forms of *dhikr* are named according to the level to which the attention has risen during the practice. One such categorization, based upon the writings of al-Sha'rānī, a sixteenth-century Egyptian Sufi, lists seven forms of *dhikr*, experienced successively as the soul ascends within:³

Dhikr al-lisān or *dhikr al-lafẓī*. *Dhikr* of the tongue (*lisān*); spoken (*lafẓī*) repetition.

Dhikr al-nafs. *Dhikr* of the mind (*nafs*); inaudible, unspoken mental repetition.

Dhikr al-qalb. *Dhikr* of the heart (*qalb*); contemplating God's beauty and majesty in the inner recesses of the heart.

Dhikr al-rūḥ. *Dhikr* of the spirit (*rūḥ*); perceiving the lights of the divine Attributes.

Dhikr al-sirr. *Dhikr* of the innermost (*sirr*); when divine mysteries are revealed in the innermost heart.

Dhikr al-khafī. *Dhikr* of the hidden (*khafī*); vision of the light of the beauty of the essential Unity.

Dhikr akhfā al-khafī. *Dhikr* of the most hidden (*akhfā*) of the hidden (*khafī*); vision of the absolute Truth.

Here, the *nafs*, *qalb*, *rūḥ*, *sirr*, *khafī* and *akhfā* are levels of being in the Sufi description of the inner human constitution, leading from the level of the human mind (*nafs*) up to the highest union with God. The heart (A. *qalb*, P. *dil*) in Sufism refers to the inner being, not to the physical organ. Rūzbihān

has this kind of categorization in mind when he speaks of the ‘food’ or “sustenance” of man’s being at these different levels:

The sustenance of the *nafs* consists of the pleasures of the world and all that it contains. The sustenance of the heart (*qalb*) consists of the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. The sustenance of the spirit (*rūh*) consists of the witnessing (*mushāhadah*) of God. That of the inner consciousness (*sirr*) consists of the rank of attaining the ultimate nearness (*qurb*) to God.

Rūzbihān, Mashrab al-Arwāh 4:14, MARB p.71, in SSE11 p.77

Characteristic of Sufi terminology, the same terms are used differently by different writers or Sufi schools. In the *Naqshbandīyah* order, for instance, *dhikr* starts with *dhikr qalbī* (of the heart), then *dhikr rūhī* (of the spirit), then *dhikr sirrī* (of the innermost), then *dhikr khafawī* (of the hidden), then *dhikr akhfawī* (of the most hidden). Each of these five forms is practised with the attention centred at different points in the chest. Then, in a state of perfect contentment, the *dhikr* is taken up to the centre in the head to perform *dhikr nafsī* with the *nafs al-qiddīсах* (sanctified mind). Finally, when the seeker is permeated by perfect peace and recollection, his *dhikr* becomes *dhikr sulṭānī* (royal *dhikr*).⁴

These terms are commonly used, in substantially the same sense, in the Sufi literature of the Indian subcontinent. They are found, for example, in *Makhzan-i Taṣāvvuf*, an exposition of mysticism by Mawlī ‘Abd al-Raḥmān Ḥayā (C19th–20th), a Sufi of the *Chishtīyah* order. Here, although the terminology is similar, the focus of attention remains within the body. Thus, in the many listings of the types of *dhikr*, many of the same terms are used, generally in the same order from lowest to highest, but referring to different practices. Some Sufis also maintain that there is a power in specific words, and that the repetition of certain words will lead to certain spiritual results, while the repetition of other words will lead to different results.

Other forms of *dhikr*, mentioned by various Sufis, include:

Dhikr al-‘alānīyah. Proclamatory (*‘alānīyah*) repetition (*dhikr*), manifest repetition; *dhikr* uttered loudly.

Dhikr al-fanā’ wa al-baqā’. Repetition (*dhikr*) of annihilation (*fanā’*) and subsistence (*baqā’*); *dhikr* that leads to the annihilation of the self and complete subsistence in the Divine.

Dhikr Allāh. Remembrance (*dhikr*) of God (*Allāh*).

Dhikr al-ṣadr. Repetition (*dhikr*) of the uppermost (*ṣadr*); *dhikr* through the uppermost part of the heart; remembrance of the breast, invocation

of the heart; a Sufi practice in which the practitioner dances, beginning with the chanting of spiritual poetry, to the accompaniment of drums and sometimes flutes. The fervour and concentration thus created can induce a deeply emotional state of mind in which the person may enter a trance-like condition. The chanting usually practised is “*Allāh* (God)” and “*Allāh Hū* (God is He).” This name is then reduced to “*Hū* (He)”. Finally, the syllable itself is reduced simply to breathing, regarded as symbolic of the life breath or life force itself.

Dhikr jahrī. Open (*jahrī*) repetition (*dhikr*); public repetition; *dhikr* repeated loudly.

Dhikr jalī. Manifest (*jalī*) repetition (*dhikr*); *dhikr* spoken aloud.

Dhikr sulṭānī. Royal (*sulṭānī*) remembrance (*dhikr*); the highest and final form of *dhikr* in the *Naqshbandī* tradition.

Like the meditation techniques of other traditions, *dhikr* is best learned and practised under the supervision of a suitable guide. The techniques are imparted orally, and it is generally understood that a *dhikr* refrain, even if well known, must be given by a *shaykh* and not chosen by the disciple. As Ibn al-Fāriḍ writes:

In the world of remembrance (*dhikr*),
the soul has her ancient lore;
My young disciples seek it from me.

Ibn al-Fāriḍ, Tāʾryah 759, DFQM p.116, SVSL pp.290–91

The more interior forms of *dhikr* generally involve postures and breath control in association with the repetition, perhaps with the attention focused at a particular place or subtle centre within the body. The outer, uttered forms of *dhikr* may be simple, or may be associated with music and dance. In both instances, the practices may be performed in solitude or in groups. Additionally, when not specifically engaged in their spiritual practice, many practitioners attempt to repeat their *dhikr* refrain constantly, in order to keep their minds on a leash, and keep themselves in the remembrance of God.

The *dhikr* refrain along with the specific techniques of spiritual practice are generally transmitted from master to successor. The chain of succession of Sufi masters, an important aspect of their legitimacy in the eyes of most Sufis, is commonly traced to ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the companion of the Prophet, who is regarded as the first Sufi. In his *Manāqib al-‘Arifīn*, Aflākī relates a *ḥadīth* regarding the *dhikr* said to have been used by Muḥammad:

‘Alī ibn (Abī) Ṭālib ... one day said: “O Messenger of God, show me the way to God by means of the smoothest roads which are the most excellent before God and the easiest for God’s bondsmen.”

The Prophet ... replied: "O 'Alī, make use of the thing which I practised, and through whose blessing I attained prophethood."

'Alī said: "O Messenger of God, tell me what that thing is!"

The Prophet replied: "That is to persevere in recollecting (*ẓikr*) God in seclusion."

Then 'Alī asked: "Will the excellence of the recollection (*ẓikr*) of God be such that all people practise recollection (*dhikr*) of God?"

The Prophet ... then said: "Hush, O 'Alī! The Resurrection will not take place as long as a reciter of the recollection (*dhikr*) of God is on the surface of the earth!" After that the Prophet ... conferred the words: 'There is no god but God (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*)!' and recited them for 'Alī and said: "O 'Alī, you be quiet while I recollect God three times, and you listen to it from me. Then, after that, you repeat it while I listen to it from you."

Ḥadīth, in Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn 10:9, MASA2 pp.997–98; cf. FKG pp.699–700

Aflākī then lists the chain of succession from 'Alī down to Aḥmad al-Ghazālī (a list that appears in numerous other Sufi chains of succession), and thence through Rūmī to his own *shaykh*, Jalāl al-Dīn Amīr ʿĀrif.

The *dhikr* refrains are not necessarily kept secret. According to a comment in Aflākī's book, concerning the life of Rūmī:

Eminent transmitters and honest authorities ... related that one day Muʿīn al-Dīn the Parvānah ... asked Mawlānā (Rūmī): "*Shaykhs* of the past ... have had separate litanies and *ẓikr* formulae, such as the words: '*Lā ilāha illā Allāh* (there is no god but God)!'⁵ And some dervishes from Turkestan would say: '*Hū! Hū!* (He! He!)'. And for the *ẓikr* some only said: '*Illā Allāh* (but God)!'. And some ascetics would repeat: '*Lā ḥawla wa lā qūwata illā billāh al-ʿAlī al-ʿAzīm* (there is no strength and power save in God, the Sublime, the Magnificent)!'. And some would say: '*Astaghfir Allāh al-ʿAzīm* (I seek forgiveness from God the Magnificent)!'. Some would enumerate one hundred times, the two phrases: '*Subḥān Allāh* (God is sublime)!' and '*Biḥamdihi* (Praise be to Him)!'. What then is Khudāvandgār's way of performing the *ẓikr*?"

Mawlānā replied: "Our *ẓikr* formula is '*Allāh! Allāh! Allāh!* (God! God! God!),' because we are partisans of God (*Allāhīyān*). We come from God and unto God we shall return."

Aḥmad al-Aflākī, Manāqib al-ʿĀrifīn 3:161, MASA1 p.250, FKG p.174

Dhikr is the accepted Sufi path to the experience of mystical consciousness. Nevertheless, though easy to describe, the silent internal forms of *dhikr* are very difficult to practise with complete concentration. Sufis, like all other mystics, have therefore provided encouragement to practitioners by way of counsel, admonition, inspiration, and in any other way they can. In his early

fourteenth-century journal, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī relates that his master, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā, recommended slow repetition of *dhikr*:

I asked: “If *ṣūfīs* offer a lengthy prayer of remembrance (*dhikr*), should they recite it slowly?”

“It is better if they recite it slowly,” he replied, then added, “The Companions of the Prophet, in reciting the *Qur’ān*, spoke so rapidly that no one knew what they were saying. At the appropriate point they would prostrate themselves. Only then was it known that they were reciting the *Qur’ān*!”

Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, Morals for the Heart 5:7, FFNA p.390, MHN p.338

Repeated with careful, one-pointed attention, *dhikr* absorbs the concentrated attention to such a degree that the practitioner becomes unconscious of everything external. Maḥmūd Qāshānī observes:

In the course of immersion in *ẓikr*, those in retreat may become oblivious to sensible things, while certain realities of the Unseen become revealed to them.

Maḥmūd Qāshānī, Miṣbāḥ al-Hidāyah wa-Miftāḥ al-Kifāyah, MHK p.171, in SSE7 p.23

In this respect, Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī relates a story told by his *shaykh*, Nizām al-Dīn Awliyā:

The master expounded on the absorption of Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī in his practice: “Once Shaykh Awḥad Kirmānī . . . came to visit Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn. The latter folded up his prayer carpet and placed it under his knees, which among the great *shaykhs* is a sign of extreme deference. When evening came, Shaykh Awḥad Kirmānī asked for music. Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn summoned some musicians and arranged for a musical gathering. Then he himself retired to a corner where he engaged in obedience to God and remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him. Shaykh Awḥad Kirmānī and the other participants in the musical assembly became absorbed in the music.

“The next morning one of the *khānaqāh* (monastery) servants came to Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn . . . and said: ‘There was a musical gathering here last night, and every moment the group was afraid that they might be bothering you.’

“‘Was there music?’ asked Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn.

“‘Yes!’ exclaimed the servant.

“‘I was not aware of it,’ replied the *shaykh*.

“‘You see,’ commented the master, . . . ‘they did not think that

Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn would be so absorbed in the moment and so intent on the remembrance (*dhikr*) of God that he could remain oblivious to the overpowering affect of music. Every time that a musical assembly would gather in his monastery (*khānaqāh*) and the participants recited the *Qurʾān*, Shaykh Shihāb al-Dīn would hear it, but the actual musical performances, with all their attendant commotion, he would not hear. Just imagine how absorbed he was in his spiritual discipline!”

Amīr Ḥasan Sijzī, Morals for the Heart 1:31, FFNA pp.56–57; cf. MHN pp.118–19

To the sincere practitioner, complete absorption in *dhikr* becomes a way of life. Al-Ghazālī has much to say on the subject. It is, he says, the route to eternal life:

Only when the heart is kept engaged in the remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Lord is eternal life attained. One should become entirely the Lord’s, and retain connection with the world only to the extent that is absolutely necessary and does not obstruct recollection (*fikr*) and remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Lord.

Al-Ghazālī, IḥyāʾʿUlūm al-Dīn 3:1, IUDG3 p.89; cf. RRS p.73

His *dhikr* should become habitual and constant:

He should constantly repeat the name of the Lord, so much so that the tongue should form the habit to such an extent that it should never stop for a moment, and the automatic repetition should continue at every moment. Then the image of the letters of the name will become engraved on his heart. Thereafter, by constantly resting (*muwāḏabah*) in it, the image of the letters will be erased from his heart, and the meaning of the word will reign over his heart, so much so that except for it, all impressions will disappear from his heart. It alone will be there. For when the heart is so engrossed in something, then all other things besides it will leave the heart. So if it is naturally and essentially engaged in the repetition (*dhikr*) of the name of the Lord, then it will be cleared of everything except the name.

At that time, it is imperative to save the heart and to protect it from the intrusion of worldly desires and thoughts, and not to ponder on any other affairs or those of others, but to stick to remembrance (*dhikr*), not thinking of anything else besides. For if the least external thought is entertained, then the heart will be deprived of the thought of the Divine and remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him.

Al-Ghazālī, IḥyāʾʿUlūm al-Dīn 3:2, IUDG3 pp.101–2; cf. RRS p.80

To be effective, he points out that the *dhikr* must be practised with depth and sincerity:

Glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and worship (*‘ibādah*) of the Lord’s name do not mean merely the movement of the tongue, but to engage the heart in and create an attachment for Him. How can the love of God lodge in the heart that is full of anxieties and desires of the world? Such people can be compared to those who desire to amass the wealth of the world and at the same time be ascetics. They are like those who want to extinguish fire by pouring oil on it, or desire to wash their hands clean with oil instead of water.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn 4:4, IUDG4 p.270; cf. RRS p.215

Life is short, and every breath should be accompanied by *dhikr*:

How much time do we not waste lamenting over things past or in being anxious about future circumstances? All this is futile. Why should you lament when what is fated must come to pass? A person’s real property is his heart beats. Every beat that goes without recollection (*fikr*) and remembrance (*dhikr*) of Him is time wasted, and consists of an irreparable loss. Through remembrance (*dhikr*) of the Lord, love for Him is born, and through recollection (*fikr*) of Him, gnosis (*ma’rifah*) is acquired.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn 4:2, IUDG4 pp.96–97; cf. RRS pp.151–52

Dhikr is the means of combatting the mind:

Desires can be driven away by recollection and remembrance (*dhikr*) of God. . . . The only way to avoid Satan is to take to the constant recollection (*dhikr*) of the Lord.

Al-Ghazālī, Iḥyā’ ‘Ulūm al-Dīn 3:1, IUDG3 pp.38, 48, RRS pp.59, 64

Other Sufis have been equally adamant about the necessity of practising quality *dhikr*. Quoting Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Mūsā al-Wāsiṭī, Hujwīrī points out that heedless *dhikr* is not the correct approach. What is required is presence of mind:

The fundamental principle of remembrance (*ẓikr*) of God is either in absence (*ghaybat*) or in presence (*ḥuẓūr*). When anyone is absent from himself and present with God, that state is not presence, but contemplation (*mushāhadat*); and when anyone is absent from God and present with himself, that state is not remembrance of God (*ẓikr*), but absence (*ghaybat*); and absence (*ghaybat*) is the result of heedlessness (*ghaflat*). The truth is best known to God.

Hujwīrī, Kashf al-Maḥjūb XI:56, KMM p.195, KM p.155

Jāmī is encouraging, and recommends keeping the *dhikr* secret, as a personal “treasure”, rather than flaunting the practice before others:

Remembrance (*ẓikr*) is a treasure,
and a hidden treasure is better;
Try to appreciate it secretly.
Be silent of lip, mute of tongue:
no ear is privy to this matter.
Say it hiddenly within the heart and soul,
so that the giant (Satan) may not discover it,
by trickery and deceit.
Keep your ego (*nafs*) from knowing of it,
lest it be struck by self-admiration.

Jāmī, Haft Awrang, HA pp.20–21; cf. in SSE9 p.27

Al-‘Arabī al-Darqāwī writes to a disciple that nothing else is required but *dhikr*:

Lastly, my brother, I strongly advise you . . . not to give up the remembrance (*dhikr*) of your Lord, as He himself told you to do it, “standing, sitting, reclining”,⁶ and in all conditions, for we need nothing but that – we, you and every man, whoever he may be.

Al-Darqāwī, Rasā’il (Collected Letters), LAD p.37

Aflākī quotes a saying attributed to Shams-i Tabrīz:

There is no food more delicious than recollection (*ẓikr*) in the mouth of certainty at the table of contentment.

Aḥmad al-Aflākī, Manāqib al-‘Ārifīn 4:59, MASA2 p.654, FKG p.451

Naṣrābādī reminds the practitioner that the ultimate purpose of *dhikr* is complete forgetfulness of self:

The reality of remembrance (*dhikr*) is that the one who remembers forgets his remembrance (*dhikr*) in the beholding of the One remembered (*madhkūr*), and by contemplating Him, forgets himself. Then God is beholding Himself.

Naṣrābādī, in Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfīyah 45, TSAA p.53; cf. in SSE9 p.23

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khayr puts it simply:

Remembrance (*dhikr*) is to forget everything but God.

Abū Sa‘īd al-Khayr, Asrār al-Tawḥīd, ATS1 p.285, in SSE9 p.23

See also: **fikr** (8.1), **Jesus prayer**, **mantra**, **shuhl**, **smaraṇa**, **yād**.

1. *Qur'ān* 24:37, AYA.
2. *Qur'ān* 2:255.
3. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, MDI p.174.
4. Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, MDI pp.174–75.
5. E.g. *Qur'ān* 3:62, 47:19, and in many other places in various similar phraseology.
6. *Qur'ān* 3:191, 4:103.

dhutanga, **dhūtanga** (Pa), **dhūtaguṇa** (S), **dhuta**, **dhūta** (S/Pa), **sbyang pa'i yan lag** (T), **tóutuó** (C), **zuda** (J) *Lit.* means or practice (*anga*, *yan lag*) of shaking off (*dhuta*) or overcoming (*sbyang*); means of removal; means of purification; renunciation; thirteen voluntary ascetic practices, appearing individually, here and there, throughout the Buddhist Pali *suttas*, with the full collection mentioned together only in the *Theragāthā*,¹ absent from the *Vinaya* (monastic code), but listed together in the Pali commentaries and associated literature, such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*.²

Asceticism was an established part of the religious and spiritual milieu in the time of the Buddha. Jain mendicants, for instance, practised complete nudity, and ascetics of the Vedic tradition practised various forms of *tapas* (austerities). The Buddha himself tried extreme fasting, but found that it did not help him find enlightenment. Having described the extremities of his practice, he came to the conclusion:

Bhikkhus, there are these two extremes that ought not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth from the householder's life. What are these two? There is devotion to indulgence in sensual pleasure regarding the objects of sensual desire, which is base, coarse, common, ignoble, and unprofitable; and there is devotion to self-mortification (*attakilamatha*), which is painful, ignoble, and unprofitable.

The Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*. And what is that Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*)? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say: right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the Middle Way (*majjhimā paṭipadā*) discovered by the Tathāgata, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, and to *nibbāna*.

Samyutta Nikāya 56:11, *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*, PTS5 pp.420–21

Nevertheless, according to the Pali *suttas*, the Buddha did in fact agree to the practice of certain less stringent ascetic practices,³ known in the Pali analytical literature as the thirteen *dhutangas*, and in Sanskrit *Mahāyāna* texts as the twelve *dhūtaguṇas*.⁴ They are not, however, compulsory, nor are they all to be practised at the same time. They are to be practised for limited periods of time in order to cultivate control of the senses.

Part of the rationale behind the practice of austerities in the Jain and some other ascetic traditions is the destruction of *kamma*, leading – it is believed – to liberation and enlightenment. The Buddha did not advocate the practice of austerities as a means of destroying *kamma*. On the contrary, a passage in the *Devadaha Sutta* explains that he permitted his disciples to practise the *dhutangas* only until the desired objective of diminishing “unwholesome states” had been achieved:

A *bhikkhu* considers thus: “When I live according to my pleasure, unwholesome states (*akusalā-dhammā*) increase in me and wholesome states (*kusalā-dhammā*) diminish; but when I exert myself in what is painful, unwholesome states diminish in me and wholesome states increase. What if I exert myself in what is painful?” So he exerts himself in what is painful, and when he does so, unwholesome states diminish in him and wholesome states increase. At a later date, he does not exert himself in what is painful. Why is that? Because the purpose for which that *bhikkhu* exerted himself . . . has been achieved. . . .

Suppose, *bhikkhus*, an arrowsmith were warming and heating an arrow shaft between two flames, making it straight and workable. When the arrow shaft had been warmed and heated between the two flames and had been made straight and workable, then at a later time he would not again warm and heat the arrow shaft. . . . Why is that? Because the purpose . . . has been achieved.

Majjhima Nikāya 101, Devadaha Sutta, PTSM2 p.225; cf. MDBB p.835

Eleven of the thirteen *dhutangas* are mentioned in the *Ārañña Vagga* of the *Anguttara Nikāya*, omitting numbers two and four.⁵ For a practitioner of each of the *dhutangas*, five kinds of motivation are outlined:

Because of his dullness and stupidity; . . . because he has evil desires, and is driven by desire; . . . because he is mad and mentally deranged; . . . because he thinks, “It is praised by the *buddhas* and the *buddhas*’ disciples;” and for the sake of few desires, contentment, eliminating defilements, solitude, and simplicity.

Anguttara Nikāya 5:181–90, Ārañña Vagga, PTSA3 pp.219–21; cf. NDBB pp.798–99

Among these, the last is said to be “the foremost, the best, the pre-eminent, the supreme, and the finest”.

The thirteen *dhutangas* listed by Buddhaghosa⁶ are grouped into four categories. Two are concerned with a monk’s robes, five with his food, five with his dwelling place, and one with his sleep. Repeating the statements from the *Ārañña Vagga*, he describes them as a means of purification. For each of the practices, Buddhaghosa provides a detailed elucidation of the meaning, the formula of the vow to be taken, instructions concerning the practice, three degrees of the practice (strict, moderate, and mild), what constitutes a transgression of the vow, and the benefits of the practice. Samples of these are given here. In all these thirteen *dhutangas*, *anga* means ‘the practice of’:

1. *Paṃsukūlikanga*. Wearing a patched robe made of rags collected from rubbish heaps (*paṃsukūla*).⁷ The benefits, says Buddhaghosa, include:

No difficulties in caring for his robe; independence from others; no fear of robbers; no craving connected with its use; suitable garb for an ascetic; a requisite recommended by the Blessed One as “valueless, easy to acquire, and faultless”;⁸ inspires confidence; yields the fruits of few desires, *etc.*; the development of the right way of conduct; and a good example is set for future generations.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:21, PTSV p.64; cf. PPV1 p.72, PPVM p.60

2. *Tecīvarikanga*. Possessing no more than three (*ti*) robes (*cīvara*).⁹ Buddhaghosa provides a verse summarizing the benefits:

No risk of hoarding haunts the man of wit
who wants no extra cloth for requisite;
Using the triple robe (*ticīvara*) where’er he goes
the pleasant relish of content he knows.

So, would the adept wander undeterred
with naught else but his robes, as flies the bird
with its own wings, then let him too rejoice
that frugality in garments be his choice.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:26, PTSV p.66, PPVM pp.61–62

3. *Piṇḍapātikanga*. Only eating food collected by begging (*piṇḍapāta*).¹⁰ *Piṇḍapāta* means the dropping (*pāta*) of lumps of food (*piṇḍa*) into an alms bowl. Buddhaghosa observes poetically:

The monk content with alms for food
has independent livelihood,
and greed in him no footing finds;

He is as free as the four winds,
 he never need be indolent,
 His livelihood is innocent,
 so let a wise man not disdain
 alms-gathering for his domain.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:30, PTSV p.67, PPVM p.63

And he quotes from the Pali *Udāna*:

If a *bhikkhu* can support himself on alms
 and live without another's maintenance,
 and pay no heed as well to gain and fame,
 the very gods indeed might envy him.

Udāna 3:8, Piṇḍa Sutta, PTSU p.31, in PPVM p.63

4. *Sapadānacārikanga*. Not missing (*sapadāna*) any house while on an alms-gathering round (*cārikā*); visiting successive houses, the intention being that a monk should not go only to houses where he knows from past experience that he will get good food. Buddhaghosa advises that this “practice is undertaken with one of the following statements: ‘I refuse a greedy alms round’ or ‘I undertake the house-to-house seeker’s practice.’”¹¹

5. *Ekāsanikanga*. Sitting down (*āsana*) to eat only once (*eka*) a day, regardless of circumstances.¹² Of the benefits, Buddhaghosa says:

No illness due to eating shall he feel
 who gladly in one session takes his meal;
 No longing to indulge his sense of taste
 tempts him to leave his work to go to waste.
 His own true happiness a monk may find
 in eating in one session, pure in mind.
 Purity and effacement wait on this,
 for it gives reason to abide in bliss.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:38, PTSV p.69, PPVM p.65

6. *Pattapiṇḍikanga*. Eating food (*piṇḍa*) from a single alms bowl (*patta*); being content with whatever is received in just one alms bowl, refusing any further vessels. Buddhaghosa writes of the benefits that accrue from the practice:

His craving for variety of tastes is eliminated; ... he perceives the purpose and the right measure of food; he is untroubled by the need to carry various dishes; his conduct is in conformity with few desires, and so on.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:41, PTSV p.70; cf. PPVM p.65

7. *Khalupacchābhattikāṅga*. Refusing (*khalu*) later (*pacchā*) food (*bhatta*); declining any food that is offered after a meal has been completed:

He is distant from committing any offence concerned with extra food; the stomach is not overloaded; food is not stored; no further search for food is necessary.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:45, PTSV p.71; cf. PPVM p.66

8. *Ārañṇikāṅga*. Living in the forest (*arañña*), away from the noise of villages and towns.¹³ Buddhaghosa quotes various definitions of what is meant by ‘forest’. The *Vinaya Piṭaka* says, “Except the village and its precincts, all is forest,”¹⁴ while the *Vibhanga* and *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (analytical texts) say, “Having gone out beyond the boundary post, all that is forest.”¹⁵ However, also according to the *Vinaya*, “A forest abode is at a distance of five hundred bow-lengths.”¹⁶ Five hundred bow-lengths, adds Buddhaghosa, “should be defined by measuring it with a strung instructor’s bow from the gatepost of a walled village, or from the distance of a stone’s throw from an unwallled one” – and he goes on to further elucidate the meaning in the case of unwallled monasteries and proximity to villages. The “five hundred bow-lengths”, he advises, can include the circumvention of obstructions such as rocks and rivers, “But anyone who blocks the path to the village here and there, so that the necessary distance is fulfilled, is cheating the ascetic practice.”¹⁷

Forest dwellers spend their nights in a village or monastery, no doubt because of danger from wild animals. Of the three degrees of forest dweller:

One who is strict must always meet the dawn in the forest; a moderate one is allowed to live in a village for the four months of the rains; and the mild one, for the winter months as well.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:53, PTSV p.73; cf. PPVM p.67

The benefits, says Buddhaghosa, include the attainment of

hitherto unobtained concentration or preservation of that which has already been obtained. . . . His mind is not distracted by un-suitable visible objects, and so on. He is free from anxiety; he abandons attachment to life; he enjoys the taste of the bliss of seclusion.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:54, PTSV p.73; cf. PPVM p.68

The practice, along with others, is recommended in the *Anguttara Nikāya*, three of which are commonly grouped together:

Without doubt, O monks, it is a great advantage to live in the forest as a hermit, to collect one's alms, to make one's robes from picked-up rags, to be satisfied with three robes.

Anguttara Nikāya 1:378–81, PTSA1 p.38, in PBD pp.102–3

9. Rukkhamūlikanga. Living at the root (*mūla*) of a tree (*rukkha*); living at the base of a tree. Buddhaghosa details which trees are suitable, and the three degrees of tree-root dweller:

The tree-root dweller (*rukkhamūlika*) should avoid such trees as a tree near a frontier, a shrine tree, a gum tree, a fruit tree, a bats' tree, a hollow tree, or a tree standing in the middle of a monastery. He can choose a tree standing on the outskirts of a monastery. . . .

This too has three degrees. One who is strict is not allowed to have his chosen tree tidied up, but while dwelling there he can move fallen leaves with his feet. A moderate one is allowed to get the place tidied up by those who happen to come along. A mild one can take up residence there after summoning monastery attendants and novices, and getting them to clear it up, level it, spread sand, and make a fence with a gate around it. On a feast day, a tree-root dweller (*rukkhamūlika*) should not remain there, but should go and sit at some other concealed place.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:56–57, PTSV p.74;

cf. PPV1 pp.84–85, PPVM pp.68–69

As for the benefits:

The perception of impermanence is aroused through seeing the constant change in tender leaves; avarice concerning dwelling places and the love of building work are absent; and he dwells in the company of gods.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:58, PTSV p.74; cf. PPV1 p.85, PPVM p.69

10. Abbhokāsikanga. Living in the open air (*abbhokāsa*). Of the three degrees of practice, Buddhaghosa says:

One who is strict is not allowed to live near a tree or a rock or a house. He should make a robe-tent right out in the open and live in that. The moderate one may live near a tree or a rock or a house, so long as he is not covered by them. The mild one is allowed these: a rock overhang without a drip ledge cut into it; a hut made of branches; a cloth cover for a chair; and a shelter treated as a fixture that has been deserted by field watchers (against the ingress of animals and birds); and so on.

The moment any of these three goes under a roof or to the base of a tree to dwell there, his *dhutanga* is transgressed.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:61, PTSV pp.75–76; cf. PPV1 p.86, PPVM p.70

The benefits, says Buddhaghosa, are: “elimination of troubles associated with a dwelling; the dispelling of sloth and torpor; he becomes detached; he can go wherever he pleases”; and – following the standard formula – “his conduct is in conformity with few desires; and so on.”

11. *Sosānikanga*. Living in a cemetery or charnel ground (*sosānika*). Although, says Buddhaghosa, anywhere where a dead body has been burnt can be regarded as a charnel ground, “even if it has been neglected for a dozen years”, the practice should be performed diligently. A monk has the wrong idea if he “lives there taking walks, has pavilions and so forth built, with beds and chairs set out, has food and water brought to him, and he lives there teaching the *Dhamma*”. Among other instructions, he adds, “Although non-human beings may wander about screeching, he should not throw anything at them to hit them.”¹⁸ Of the three degrees:

One who is strict should live where there are continual cremations and corpses and mourning. A moderate one may live where just one of these three is present. A mild one is allowed to live in a place that possesses just the bare characteristics of a charnel ground, as already described.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:66, PTSV p.77; cf. PPV1 p.88, PPVM p.71

“Mindfulness of death (*maraṇasati*)”, says Buddhaghosa, is among the benefits, as well as “the dispelling of sensual lust (*kāma-rāga*), perceiving the true nature of the body, relinquishing the vanity of health”, and the ready availability of corpses for practising meditative development of a mental image (*nimitta*) on repulsiveness (*asubha*).¹⁹

12. *Yathāsanthatikanga*. Having any (*yathā*) covering (*santhata*), making no complaint, but content with whatever falls to his lot. *Santhata* means a ‘spread’, such as a rug or mat, so *yathāsanthatika* denotes ‘spreading a mat wherever one may be’. The term is commonly translated as the ‘practice of any-bed user’. Of the three degrees, Buddhaghosa writes:

One who is strict is not permitted to ask (the one who offers) about the resting place that has fallen to his lot: “Is it far?” or “Is it too near?” or “Is it infested by non-human beings, snakes, and so on?” or “Is it hot?” or “Is it cold?”. A moderate one is allowed to ask, but not to go and inspect it. A mild one is allowed to inspect it and, if he does not like it, to choose another.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:70, PTSV p.78; cf. PPV1 p.89, PPVM p.72

The benefits include “contentment with whatever one gets, and relinquishing concern regarding inferiority or superiority and approval or disapproval”:

One vowed to any bed will be
 content with what he gets, and he
 can sleep in bliss without dismay
 on nothing but a spread of hay.

He is not eager for the best,
 no lowly couch does he detest,
 He aids his young companions too
 that to the monk’s good life are new.

So for a wise man to delight
 in any kind of bed is right;
 A noble one this custom loves
 as one the sages’ lord approves.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:72, PTSV p.78, PPVM p.72

13. *Nesajjikanga*. Remaining in a sitting position (*nesajjika*), without lying down, even for sleep.²⁰ Buddhaghosa clarifies: “The sitter (*nesajjika*) can get up in any one of three watches of the night and walk to and fro, for lying down is the only posture not permitted.” The strict practitioner can use neither a back rest, nor a cloth band or binding strap (to prevent sleep). A moderate one can have one of these three. And a mild one can have all three, together with a chair, with or without arms.²¹ As for the benefits (*Māra* is the evil power and the personification of death):

The adept that can place, crosswise,
 his feet to rest upon his thighs,
 and sit with back erect shall make
 foul *Māra*’s evil heart to quake.

No more in supine joys to plump
 and wallow in lethargic dump;
 Who sits for rest and finds it good
 shines forth in the ascetics’ wood.

The happiness and bliss it brings
 has naught to do with worldly things;
 So must the sitter’s (*nesajjika*) vow befit
 the manners of a man of wit.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 2:76, PTSV p.79, PPVM p.73

The twelve *Mahāyāna dhūtaguṇas* are the same as the thirteen Pali practices, omitting five and six (which relate to eating), and adding the wearing of garments made of coarse hemp and wool.

With the advent of settled monastic communities, the *dhutangas* lost popularity, but have been revived by the Thai *Theravāda* Forest Tradition, a reformist movement that began around the start of the twentieth century. The Thai term *thudong* or *tudong* is a phonetic rendering of *dhutanga*, and often refers to the way of life of a forest-dwelling monk. Thai monks would go wandering from place to place on what was called a *dhutanga* pilgrimage, although the mode of life often bore little resemblance to the thirteen ascetic practices, and was more of a release from the monotony of monastic life. The Thai monk, Ajahn Dune Atulo (1888–1983) recalls:

Some monks and novices, after the rains retreat, like to go off wandering in groups to various places. Each of them makes a big production out of preparing his requisites and a full set of *dhutanga* accessories. But many of them go in a manner that deviates from the purpose of wandering for seclusion. For instance, some of them wear their *dhutanga* accessories on air-conditioned buses. Some go visiting their old friends in company offices.

So Luang Pu once said in the midst of a gathering of meditation monks, “To make yourself a good-looking wandering monk isn’t proper at all. It goes against the purpose of going out to wander. Each of you should reflect a great deal on this. The purpose of wandering in meditation is only one thing: to train and polish the heart so that it’s free of defilements. To go wandering in meditation only in body, but without taking along the heart, is nothing excellent at all.”

Ajahn Dune Atulo, Gifts He Left Behind, GLBA p.68

Another Thai monk, Ajahn Chah (1918–1992), similarly advises:

Practise according to your capacity. Do you sleep a lot? Then try going against the grain. Do you eat a lot? Then try eating less. Take as much practice as you need, using *sīla* (good conduct), *samādhi* (concentration), and *paññā* (wisdom) as your basis. Then throw in the *dhutanga* practices also. These *dhutanga* practices are for digging into the defilements. You may find the basic practices still not enough to really uproot the defilements, so you have to incorporate the *dhutanga* practices as well.

These *dhutanga* practices are really useful. Some people can’t kill off the defilements with basic *sīla* and *samādhi*, they have to bring in the *dhutanga* practices to help out. The *dhutanga* practices cut off many things....

Dhutanga: this translates as ‘the practices which are hard to do.’ These are the practices of the noble ones (*i.e. arahantas*). Whoever wants to be a noble one must use the *dhutanga* practices to cut the defilements. It’s difficult to observe them and it’s hard to find people with the commitment to practise them, because they go against the grain.

Such as with robes; they say to limit your robes to the basic three robes; to maintain yourself on alms food; to eat only in the bowl; to eat only what you get on an alms round, if anyone brings food to offer afterwards, you don’t accept it.

Keeping this last practice in central Thailand is easy, the food is quite adequate, because there they put a lot of food in your bowl. But when you come to the Northeast here, this *dhutanga* takes on subtle nuances – here you get plain rice! In these parts, the tradition is to put only plain rice in the alms bowl. In central Thailand they give rice and other foods also, but around these parts you get only plain rice. This *dhutanga* practice becomes really ascetic. You eat only plain rice; whatever is brought to offer afterwards you don’t accept. Then there is eating once a day, at one sitting, from only one bowl – when you’ve finished eating you get up from your seat and don’t eat again that day.

These are called *dhutanga* practices. Now who will practise them? It’s hard these days to find people with enough commitment to practise them because they are demanding, but that is why they are so beneficial.

What people call practice these days is not really practice. If you really practise it’s no easy matter. Most people don’t dare to really practise, don’t dare to really go against the grain. They don’t want to do anything which runs contrary to their feelings. People don’t want to resist the defilements, they don’t want to dig at them or get rid of them.

In our practice, they say not to follow your own moods. Consider: we have been fooled for countless lifetimes already into believing that the mind is our own. Actually it isn’t, it’s just an impostor. It drags us into greed, drags us into aversion, drags us into delusion, drags us into theft, plunder, desire, and hatred. These things aren’t ours. Just ask yourself right now: do you want to be good? Everybody wants to be good. Now doing all these things, is that good? There! People commit malicious acts and yet they want to be good. That’s why I say these things are tricksters, that’s all they are.

Ajahn Chah, Food for the Heart, FHAC pp.100–1

See also: **tapas** (8.4).

1. *Theragāthā* 16:7.842–65, *Bhaddiya*, *PTST* p.80.
2. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2, *PTSV* pp.59–83.
3. *E.g.* *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:181–90, *PTSA3* pp.219–21; *Majjhima Nikāya* 5 (*Anaṅgaṇa Sutta*), 113 (*Sappurisa Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.30–31, *PTSM3* pp.39–42.
4. *E.g.* *Mahāvīyutpatti* 49, *MVSK*; *Dharma Saṃgraha* 63, *DSMM*; *Aṣṭa-sāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, *ASPP* p.387, in *BDBL* pp.135–37.
5. *Anguttara Nikāya* 5:181–90, *Ārañṇaka Vagga*, *PTSA3* pp.219–21.
6. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2, *PTSV* pp.59–83.
7. *E.g.* *Samyutta Nikāya* 15:13, *Tiṃsamatta Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.187; *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:59 *Dārukammika Sutta*, *PTSA3* pp.391–92.
8. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:27, *PTSA2* p.26.
9. *E.g.* *Samyutta Nikāya* 15:13, *Tiṃsamatta Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.187.
10. *E.g.* *Samyutta Nikāya* 15:13, *Tiṃsamatta Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.187; *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:59, *Dārukammika Sutta*, *PTSA3* pp.391–92.
11. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2:31, *PTSV* p.67, *PPVM* p.63.
12. *Anguttara Nikāya* 8:41, *Uposatha Vagga*, *PTSA4* p.250.
13. *E.g.* *Samyutta Nikāya* 15:13, *Tiṃsamatta Sutta*, *PTSS2* p.187; *Anguttara Nikāya* 6:59, *Dārukammika Sutta*, *PTSA3* p.391.
14. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Vibhanga*, *PTSV3* p.46.
15. *Vibhanga* 251; *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 3:186, *PTSPI* p.176.
16. *Vinaya Piṭaka*, *Sutta Vibhanga*, *PTSV3* p.263.
17. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2:49, 51, *PTSV* p.72; *cf.* *PPVM* p.67.
18. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2:65, *PTSV* pp.76–77; *cf.* *PPV1* p.87, *PPVM* p.71.
19. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2:67, *PTSV* p.77; *cf.* *PPV1* p.88, *PPVM* p.71.
20. *E.g.* *Majjhima Nikāya* 32, *Mahāgosinga Sutta*, *PTSM1* p.219.
21. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 2:73–74, *PTSV* pp.78–79; *cf.* *PPV1* p.90, *PPVM* pp.72–73.

dhyān(a) (S/H/Pu), **jhāna** (Pa), **dhiān** (Pu), **bsam gtan** (T), **chán** (C), **zen** (J) *Lit.* reflection, meditation, concentration, contemplation; to contemplate some form, to think of it, to remember, mentally visualize or imagine it, and behold it within oneself; intense inner focus and concentration, free of all mental waverings and distractions of thought; from the Sanskrit root *dhyai* (to muse, to meditate, to contemplate). In practice, *dhyāna* is used as a general term for meditation, as well as more specifically for the exercise and concentration of the internal faculty of visualization.

In Buddhism,¹ the Sanskrit *dhyāna*, the Pali *jhāna* and the Tibetan *bsam gtan* refer to both meditation and the successive stages of meditative absorption experienced on the meditator's ascent through *rūpaloka* (world of form, world of images, world of archetypes) and *arūpaloka* (formless world). The

various terms are sometimes used synonymously with *samādhi*, especially in the *Mahāyāna* and Tibetan traditions. The corresponding Chinese and Japanese terms are *chán* and *zen*, which have become the names of major Buddhist schools in those countries. Meditative practices vary among the different Buddhist schools and traditions.

The mind has two primary faculties that need to be taken into account in any kind of meditation technique – the power to think and the power to visualize. Whatever a person thinks about, associated images automatically appear before the mind’s eye. Therefore, in meditation, both these faculties need to be consciously directed, otherwise they will automatically occupy themselves with material things. *Dhyāna* is practised in order to occupy the faculty of visualization, while the thinking faculty is usually occupied by concentration on a *mantra*. This continuous mental repetition of some word or words – is called *japa* (S. recitation) or *smaraṇa* (S. remembrance). *Dhyāna* is also used as a non-specific, generic term for meditation.

In his *Yoga Sūtras*, Patañjali lists *dhyāna* as the seventh of his eight part (*aṣṭāṅga*) description of *yoga*. The first five parts, he says, are external, relating to human conduct and the realm of the material senses; but the last three (*dhāraṇā*, *dhyāna*, *samādhi*) are internal. *Dhyāna*, he says, arises as a result of mature *dhāraṇā* (concentration). Speaking about the contemplative state of a still mind, free of thought, he says:

Concentration (*dhāraṇā*) is confining the mind
to one particular thing.

Contemplation (*dhyāna*) is the unbroken flow of the mind
towards that particular thing.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 3:2

The mental waves (*vṛttis*) or disturbances caused by obstacles (*kleśhas*) to spiritual life, such as egotism and other human imperfections, are all removed by *dhyāna*:

Their waves are to be eliminated by meditation (*dhyāna*).

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 2:11

Dhyāna then leads on to absorption (*samādhi*) in the object of contemplation. The *Vedāntasāra* therefore defines *dhyāna* as incomplete, intermittent or “non-continuous” absorption in *Brahman* (the supreme Reality, God); continuous absorption is *samādhi*:

Meditation (*dhyāna*) is the non-continuous resting
of the mind on *Brahman*, the One without a second.

Sadānanda, Vedāntasāra 207; cf. VSY p.113

Dhyāna is recommended throughout the *Upanishads* and other Indian sacred texts as an essential part of the means to attain spiritual realization.² Sometimes, it is mentioned in the context of Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*; in other instances, *dhyāna* is used in a more general sense. But in the absence of any clear description of the kind of meditation being referred to, *dhyāna* can only be understood generally:

Though a man may perform *tapas* (austerities) standing on one leg for a thousand years, it will not be equal to one-sixteenth part of (the results of) deep contemplation (*dhyāna yoga*).

Paingala Upanishad 4:15

The *Bhagavad Gītā* maintains that surrender and renunciation of self are even higher than meditation, because complete surrender of self leading to the supreme peace of *Brahman* is the goal of meditation. A seeker, however, progresses by degrees, one step at a time:

A clear understanding (*jñāna*) (of spiritual matters) is better than mechanical practice (*abhyāsa*).

Meditation (*dhyāna*) is superior to a clear understanding.

But even better than meditation (*dhyāna*) is surrendering the fruits of all actions.

In the wake of such surrender follows peace (*shānti*).

Bhagavad Gītā 12:12

The basis of sound meditation is a pure lifestyle. Hence, the *Gītā* sees *dhyāna* as only one of a number of factors that must come together in a seeker before the supreme realization of *Brahman* can be attained:

Learn from Me, briefly,

how one who has attained perfection (*siddhi*) reaches *Brahman*, the supreme height of wisdom (*jñāna*).

Endowed with pure intelligence, firm in self-control, abandoning the senses such as hearing and the others, as well as attractions and aversions –

Seeking solitary places, eating little, with body, mind and speech always under control, always in meditation (*dhyāna yoga*), established in detachment (*vairāga*), abandoning egotism, violence, arrogance,

lust, anger and possessiveness, tranquil and selfless –

Such a one becomes fit for attainment of *Brahman*.

Bhagavad Gītā 18:50–53

A number of texts extol the virtues of *dhyāna* as the best means of attaining the Divine. The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra* describes *dhyāna* as the highest form of worship, second only to the actual realization of the Divine:

The highest is realization of the Supreme;
Meditation (*dhyāna*) on the Supreme is in the middle;
Praise (*stuti*) and recitation of hymns (*japa*) is the lowest;
And external worship (*pūjā*) is the lowest of all.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 14:122; cf. GLMT p.441, in IP2 p.737

In the *Prashna Upanishad*, a seeker asks about the after-death fate of someone who passes their entire life in meditation on *Aum*, the creative power:

Which world does that human being attain who meditates (*abhi-dhyāyīta*) on *Aum* until the end of his life?

Prashna Upanishad 5:1

He is told that since *Aum*, as the creative power, is both the manifest and unmanifest aspects of the Supreme, meditation on *Aum* will lead to the realization of one or the other. Even incomplete meditation on *Aum* will have positive results, such as rebirth as a human being or a stay in one of the heavenly regions of the mind. Here, the *ṛich*, *yajus* and *sāman* verses or *mantras* are symbolic references to the *Ṛig*, *Yajur* and *Sāma Vedas*, which are symbolized by the letters *a-u-m*:

The sound *Aum* ... is verily both the higher and the lower *Brahman*. Therefore, with its support the wise man will reach one or the other.

If he meditates (*abhidhyāyīta*) on one letter (*a*), then, being enlightened even by that, he will quickly return to the earth (after death). The *ṛich* (*mantras*) will lead him into the world of men. There, practising austerity, chastity and faith, he will experience greatness.

Then, (if he meditates on this) as of two letters (*a-u*), he attains the mind. He is led by the *yajus* (*mantras*) to the intermediate space, the world of the moon; having experienced greatness there, he returns hither again.

But if he meditates (*abhidhyāyīta*) on the highest Being (*Purusha*) with the three letters of the syllable *Aum*, he becomes one with the (divine) Light, the Sun. Just as a snake is freed from its skin, even so is he freed from sins. He is led by *sāman* (*mantras*) to the world of *Brahmā*. Here, he beholds the supreme Being (*Purusha*), higher than the high and pervading all bodies.

Prashna Upanishad 5:2–5

Likewise, when the deity *Brahmā* is asked in the *Kaivalya Upanishad*:

O *Bhagavān*, teach me that knowledge (*vidyā*) of *Brahman*, forever sought by the good, which is hidden, and by which a wise man, freed from all evil, can reach the highest Being (*Purusha*).

Kaivalya Upanishad 1:1

Brahmā replies, “Seek to know (*Brahman*) by faith (*shraddhā*), devotion (*bhakti*), and the practice of meditation (*dhyāna yoga*).”³

The *Shvetāshvatara Upanishad* says that although God may be hidden behind the veil of the three *guṇas* (attributes) from which all multiplicity and causality have arisen, yet, through *dhyāna*, He can still be perceived:

Those who have practised the *yoga* of meditation (*dhyāna yoga*)
have realized the power of God,
hidden behind His own attributes (*guṇas*),
which alone rule all causes, from time to the individual self.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 1:3

Using an interesting metaphor, the same *Upanishad* goes on to say that just as fire is latent in wood, yet has to be manifested by rotating a drill in a wooden base (an ancient technique for making fire), so can both the soul (*ātman*) and God be revealed by the meditation (*dhyāna*) of repeating (rotating) the syllable *Aum* within the body.⁴ Since *Aum* is a name for the creative power, the passage also means that God is found through contact with the unspoken, mystic, and inner *Aum*:

As the appearance of fire, when latent in its source,
remains unseen – though its subtle form is not destroyed,
but can once again be made visible by a drill in its base –
So indeed can both (the individual *ātman* and universal *Brahman*)
be found within the body by means of *Aum* (*Praṇava*).
By making one’s own body the base, and *Aum* the drill,
through the rotation of meditation (*dhyāna*),
God can be seen, as something hidden is revealed.

Shvetāshvatara Upanishad 1:13–14, TPU p.396

The *Maitreya Upanishad* describes *dhyāna* as “the mind freed from thinking of sensual objects”.⁵ Shankara defines *dhyāna* as complete detachment of the mind from everything except identification with *Brahman*:

Becoming independent of everything as a result of the unassailable thought, “I, verily, am *Brahman*” is commonly known by the word *dhyāna*, and generates supreme bliss.

Shankara, Aparokshānubhūti 123; cf. SRSS pp.66–67

He also says that *dhyāna* is the way to purify the mind:

As gold that has been purified by thorough heating on the fire gives up its impurities and regains its original lustre, so the mind, through meditation (*dhyāna*), gives up its impurities of *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (the three *guṇas*), and attains to the reality of *Brahman*.

Shankara, Vivekachūḍāmaṇi 361; cf. VCSM p.137

The *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* says that it is only by meditation that the mountain of old *karma* can be destroyed:

Though sin should become like a mountain, extending over a vast area, it can be destroyed by *dhyāna yoga*. No other destroyer like this has ever been found.

Dhyānabindu Upanishad 1

The same *Upanishad* adds that the best form of *dhyāna* is to “apply oneself to the resounding sound of *Om̐kāra*” and to listen to the *Nāda* (Sound), saying that the recommended means of contacting the Sound is *prāṇāyāma*.⁶

Various techniques of practising *dhyāna* are described in different texts. The *Amṛitabindu Upanishad* speaks of meditation at the heart centre (*chakra*):

The mind should be controlled to such an extent that it becomes merged in the heart. This is *jñāna* (realization) and this is *dhyāna* (meditation) also; all else is discussion and words.

Amṛitabindu Upanishad 5; cf. TMU p.19

The *Yogatattva Upanishad*, relating to Patañjali’s eightfold *yoga*, speaks of the “*dhyāna* of God between the eyebrows (*bhrū-madhya*)”.⁷

Some texts speak of a form of *dhyāna* that is akin to a form of *upāsana* (worship, meditation) in which a mental picture of the deity or saint is brought before the mind’s eye and worshipped. The mental image may be bathed, dressed, offered flowers, and so on – all in meditative imagination. This is known as *saguṇa dhyāna* or *saguṇa upāsana*. The purpose of this kind of meditation is often the fulfilment of some particular need or desire. It is believed that when the deity is pleased with the worship, he or she will fulfil the wishes of the devotee, either by making a personal appearance or by knowing the content of the devotee’s mind. *Saguṇa* (with attributes) is contrasted with *nirguṇa* (without attributes) *dhyāna*, which entails meditation on the unmanifest form of *Brahman*.

Dhyāna ... is of two kinds: with attributes (*saguṇa*) and without attributes (*nirguṇa*). With attributes is meditation (*dhyāna*) on the deity; without attributes is on the reality of the *Ātman*.

Shāṇḍilya Upanishad 10:1; cf. YU p.483

Practise *dhāraṇā* for a period of six *ghaṭikās* (two hours and twenty-four minutes). Controlling the *prāṇa* in (the region of) *ākāśha* (the throat centre) and contemplating on the deity who grants his wishes – this is said to be *saguṇa dhyāna* capable of giving (miraculous powers, such as) *aṇimā* (lightness of body), *etc.* One who is engaged in *nirguṇa dhyāna* attains the stage of *samādhi*.

Yogatattva Upanishad 104–5, TMU p.152

Maharaj Sawan Singh says that from the perspective of the *sants* (saints), contemplation of any material object, whatever it may represent, has little value:

Among the Hindus, gazing on the rising sun is regarded as a means to contemplation. Some people dwell upon the pictures of saints. This is contemplation of material and lifeless objects. In *dhyān*, one may see pictures with frames, but these cannot lead one upward. Both pictures and idols are lifeless. They cannot draw one upward. Therefore, a picture cannot pull us up. He alone can draw us to the spiritual regions who frequents them himself. Contemplation on the form of ancient saints can do us little good. Worship of the lifeless is prohibited in the teachings of *sant mat* (teachings of the saints).

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Philosophy of the Masters I, PMS1 p.83

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, whose author speaks of *haṭha yoga* as the first rung of the ladder that leads to *rāja yoga*, describes seven steps to attainment of the spiritual goal. *Dhyāna* or *dhyāna yoga*, he says, is the sixth stage, leading to the seventh, *samādhi*. With some variations and elaboration, he is following the outlines of *yoga* given by Patañjali.

Three forms of *dhyāna* are described: *sthūla* (gross), *tejas* or *jyotis* (light), and *sūkshma* (subtle). Like many ancient esoteric texts, the teaching of the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* is presented as a series of questions and answers between a disciple and his master. In this case, the *guru* is Gheraṇḍa and the disciple is Chaṇḍa Kāpālī.

Sthūla-dhyāna, explains Gheraṇḍa, involves contemplation on an imaginary scene of great beauty and peace at the centre of which is the devotee's deity or *guru*. For instance, having closed the eyes:

Let him contemplate that
there is a sea of nectar in his heart:

That, in the midst of that sea,
 there is an island of precious stones,
 the very sand of which is pulverized diamonds and rubies;
 That, on all sides of it, there are *kadamba* trees,
 laden with sweet flowers;
 That, next to these trees, like a rampart,
 there is a row of flowering trees and shrubs, . . .
 and that the fragrance of these flowers
 is spread all round, in every quarter.
 In the middle of this garden, let the *yogī* imagine that
 there stands a beautiful *kalpa* tree (wish-fulfilling tree),
 having four branches, representing the four *Vedas*,
 and that it is full of flowers and fruits.
 Insects are humming there and cuckoos singing.
 Beneath that tree,
 let him imagine a rich platform of precious gems,
 and on that a costly throne inlaid with jewels,
 and on that throne sits his particular deity,
 as taught to him by his *guru*.
 Let him contemplate on the appropriate form,
 ornaments, and vehicle of that deity.
 The constant contemplation of such a form is *sthūla-dhyāna*.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 6:2–8, GSV pp.52–53

Several other examples of imaginary scenes are also given as instances of *sthūla-dhyāna*. Two examples of *jyotir-dhyāna* (contemplation of light) are then described. The first entails concentration at the *mūlādhāra* or rectal *chakra* where the *kuṇḍalinī* lies as the subtle life force ‘coiled’ as potential energy that can be ‘released’:

In the *mūlādhāra* is *kuṇḍalinī*,
 having the form of a serpent.
 The *jīvātman* is there like the flame of a lamp.
 Contemplate on this flame as the luminous *Brahmā*.
 This is *tejo-dhyāna* or *jyotir-dhyāna*.

In the middle of the two eyebrows, above the *manas* (mind),
 there is a light consisting of *Aum̐*.
 Let him contemplate on this flame.
 This is another method of contemplation of light (*tejo-dhyāna*).

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 6:16–17; cf. GSV p.54

Lastly, he describes *sūkshma-dhyāna*:

O Chaṇḍa! Having heard the *tejo-dhyāna*,
 listen now to the *sūkshma-dhyāna*.
 When by a great good fortune,
 the *kuṇḍalinī* is awakened,
 it joins with the *ātman*
 and leaves the body through the portals of the two eyes,
 and enjoys itself by walking on the royal road (that leads to God).
 It cannot be seen on account of its subtlety
 and great changeability.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 6:18–19; cf. *GSV* p.54

Gheraṇḍa then concludes by pointing out that:

The contemplation of light (*tejo-dhyāna*) is a hundred times
 superior to contemplation of gross form (*sthūla-dhyāna*);
 And a hundred thousand times superior to *tejo-dhyāna*
 is the contemplation of the *sūkshma*.

O Chaṇḍa! I have explained *dhyāna yoga* to you –
 a most precious knowledge;
 For by it, there is direct perception of the Self.
 Hence *dhyāna* is to be praised.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 6:21–22; cf. *GSV* p.55

In these instances from the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, it is clear that *dhyāna* is the exercise of the faculty of internal sight, either entirely imaginary or of something actually perceived within. The writer also makes it clear that *dhyāna* that permits the practitioner to leave the body “through the portals of the two eyes”⁸ – the third eye or eye centre – is far superior to *dhyāna* that is either imaginary or is of something within the domain of the *chakras* and *prāṇas* of the physical body.

Mystics who teach the practice of the inner Sound (*Shabd abhyās*, *surat Shabd yoga*) instruct their disciples to begin their practice at this centre between the two eyes. To concentrate the thinking faculty of the mind, they advise the repetition (S. *smaraṇa*, Pu. *simran*) of names with the attention fixed at this centre. The names given to a disciple by his *guru* are those ascribed to an ascending series of powers that are encountered on the inner journey. The Sound (*Shabd*) is the divine power by which the creation has been brought into being and is continually sustained in existence.

To focus the mind’s faculty of visualization, such mystics or masters recommend *dhyāna*. To begin with, they advise that the object of contemplation should be the inner darkness of one’s own being. But, as concentration improves, they instruct contemplation on the recollected form

of the master – not of any imaginary scene, but of the face of the master, and particularly the eyes.

Everything in life has associations, and the mind is naturally drawn by that association. Since a master of the Word is associated only with the creative power and with God, contemplation upon his form leads the mind of the disciple towards the master on the inner planes. Both the repetition that the master gives and the contemplation on his recollected face evoke the atmosphere of the master's presence, and the disciple is drawn upward towards a meeting with the master in the astral realms. At that point, the visualized *dhyāna* is replaced by actual *dhyāna* of the master's astral form.

The mind naturally goes to that upon which it thinks and contemplates. If it thinks and dwells upon things of this world, however beautiful or ennobling they may be, then the mind will remain in the world. Then, after death, it will again be attracted back to the world in another life. The *dhyāna* of a master replaces the images of the world with images associated with the Divine.

This is why it is recommended that *dhyāna* is only of the master's eyes. If the master is visualized in any external situation, the mind will automatically start thinking about that scene, and both concentration and contemplation will be lost. Likewise, *dhyāna* is not to be practised of a painting or photograph of the master, since these are lifeless items made of the materials of this world. The *dhyāna* should be derived from personal experience with a living master.

Modern Indian *sants* have described in some detail the practice of this kind of *dhyān*. Firstly, *dhyān* can only be practised when the mind has been sufficiently concentrated by means of *simran*:

The real necessity for *dhyān* arises when our mind becomes fully concentrated by *simran* at the eye centre. Then *dhyān* is needed to hold it fast there and prevent it from slipping down. The more your love for the master increases, the more quickly and easily will the master's *dhyān* come to you.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Divine Light, The Path, DL p.318

Dhyān or contemplation is required for keeping the mind still in the darkness. It is not essential, but is only a means of keeping the attention in the empty darkness at the eye centre. If you can concentrate your attention in the darkness without contemplation, then you may do away with *dhyān*. The idea is to keep the mind motionless, and if during contemplation your attention gets busy in visualizing the place and the form of the master, then it is better to stick to *simran* only with attention at the eye focus. When you do *dhyān*, then do not think of the surroundings or of the dress or posture of the master, but try to visualize his face, especially the eyes and the forehead.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Quest for Light 331, QFL p.168

When we are attending to our daily duties, our mind is usually not occupied with them, but is wandering. Saints say, “Hold the reins of the mind tight in your hand throughout the day; then, when you sit in *bhajan* (meditation), concentration will be quick and easy.” It is easier to concentrate the mind by *simran* than by any other practice. Saints do not waste even a single minute but keep their attention fixed either in *simran* or in *dhyān* (contemplation) or in *dhun* (Shabd, Sound). *Simran* collects and concentrates the mind and the soul. *Dhyān* helps to keep it at one place, and *dhun* or *shabd* pulls it up. Do not let the mind remain idle. When we go up into higher regions, the mind stays back; but when we return, it joins us again on the way back to the body.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 8, SG p.14

Q. The Great Master once wrote or said to sit in *dhyān* for a few minutes before beginning the *simran*. Can you explain something further on that?

A. *Dhyān* means thinking about the master, visualizing his form before you, feeling that you are now in his presence. And the purpose of all this is to create that atmosphere of bliss and peace in which we have to attend to our meditation. Our mind is intensely pulled in all directions; therefore, when we sit for meditation, we need some time to compose it, to push it on the path, so to say, before we can start. So it will just create that atmosphere, and then, to attend to meditation, you do *simran* and *dhyān*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 181, DTL p.165

Q. It seems the attention jumps from *simran* to *dhyān* and from *dhyān* to *simran*, because to do it simultaneously is not so easy.

A. At the time of *dhyān* the distraction is in trying to associate the master with outside activities. But if we just contemplate on the face of the master, cutting down all outside associations, then it is not a distraction, it's a help.

The object of *simran* is to withdraw the consciousness to the eye centre. The object of *dhyān* is to hold the attention there, and love holds the attention there. When we love somebody, our attention is automatically held by that person. We don't look anywhere else. We just still our mind, focus our mind on that particular face. We're not conscious of anything around the person whatsoever. That is *dhyān*, and only love can create that. Then *dhyān* is no distraction.

But when you associate the master with outside activities in the world, there's a distraction in *simran* and *dhyān* because it is not the master you are contemplating. Then you are also concerned with associations which distract your attention, and that *dhyān* is not a complete *dhyān*.

Maharaj Charan Singh, Die to Live 187, DTL p.168

Ultimately, the purpose of visualized *dhyān* is to lead on to the real *dhyān*, when the master is encountered within:

By repetition (*simran*) one can cross the stars, the sun and the moon regions, and make contact with the radiant form of the master. This is as far as repetition will take the attention. The course of repetition ends here.

Dhyān is to make the attention stay there. This form, being so beautiful, attracts the attention; and this attraction, when fully developed, gives the attention the power to stay there. So long as *dhyān* is incomplete, the soul goes that far with the help of repetition, but comes back. When one has merged his petty self in it and lost his I-ness, then the radiant form talks as we talk here outside, and replies to enquiries and guides him to the higher regions. The sweet bell sound exercises its magnetic influence and the soul commences the spiritual journey, the master giving the necessary help and guidance and, step by step, taking him to the Creator in *sach khand*.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, Spiritual Gems 200, SG pp.320–21

Dhyāna of one's *guru* is an ancient tradition in both yogic and *sant* traditions. Patañjali observes:

Fixing the mind on those who are free from attachment
bestows stability of mind.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:37

In keeping with their style, Indian *sants* have generally put the matter very simply:

My dear one, practise contemplation (*dhyān*)
on the form of your master;
Without this, you cannot be liberated.

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 19:2.1, SBP p.143

The palace of the Lord God (*harmandar*) is so beautiful:
within it, there are gems, rubies, pearls, and flawless diamonds.
A fortress of gold surrounds this source of nectar:
how can I climb up to the fortress without a ladder?
By meditating (*dhiān*) on the Lord, through the *guru*,
I am blessed and exalted.

Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth 17, AGK

I behold the fruitful vision of the saint (*sant*):
this is the meditation (*dhiān*) I have taken.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 531, AGK

Dhyāna in Jainism

According to Jain philosophy, *dhyāna* is one of the six internal austerities (*tapas*). *Dhyāna* of the right type is considered of the greatest significance because it is believed to be the most effective way of removing karmic matter from the soul, thereby making spiritual progress and finding peace, enlightenment, and liberation:

He, who while observing self-control, vows and austerities, realizes his self through virtuous meditation (*dharma-dhyāna*) and pure meditation (*shukla-dhyāna*) is said to possess supreme equanimity (*parama-samādhi*).

Kundakunda, Niyamasāra 9:123; cf. NAKU p.56

In the Jain context, *dhyāna* refers to both thinking and reflection as well as higher contemplation. It is divided into four categories – two negative, two positive. The four categories of *dhyāna* are:

1. *Ārta-dhyāna* (painful reflection); constantly thinking about experiencing pleasure, avoiding pain, avoiding disease, and acquiring things in a future life that have not been acquired in the present life.
2. *Raudra-dhyāna* (wicked reflection); repeated thinking about the delight in negative actions, specifically, lying, stealing, harming other beings, and the enjoyment of sense pleasures.
3. *Dharma-dhyāna* (virtuous reflection); meditation on the meaning of the scriptures, on the removal of wrong belief and conduct, on the effects of *karma*, and on the nature of the universe.
4. *Shukla-dhyāna* (pure meditation); in which the attempt is made to still completely all bodily, verbal and mental activity, and when all *karma* is finally destroyed. According to the *Tattvārtha Sūtra*, sessions of *dharma-dhyāna* and *shukla-dhyāna* should not last longer than one *muhūrta* (forty-eight minutes).⁹

Each of these four categories of *dhyāna* is itself subdivided into four categories. The *Tattvārtha Sūtra*¹⁰ relates these categories of *dhyāna* to the fourteen stages (*guṇasthānas*) of spiritual evolution on the way to full liberation, which range from complete spiritual ignorance to full enlightenment. The first two categories of the fourth *dhyāna* are said to be possible only by those who are in the eleventh and twelfth stages. However, Jain authorities vary in their allocation of the different *dhyānas* to the *guṇasthānas*, and some say that *shukla-dhyāna* is possible at the eighth stage.¹¹

The first and second categories of *shukla-dhyāna* are concerned with discovering the true nature of the soul. In the first, taking a scriptural text as a basis, the mind is focused on the consideration of some aspect of existence, whether inanimate like an atom or animate like the soul. The various aspects of its existence are considered, especially its permanence or transience, tangibility or intangibility, origins, dissolution, continuation, and so on – the mind moving from one aspect to another. These meditations are known as *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās*, of which twelve are commonly listed.

The second category of *shukla-dhyāna* focuses on just a single aspect of something, without reflection upon its other aspects or perspectives. In both cases, the intention is to discover the true nature of the self. Some descriptions of these two stages indicate a more contemplative state in which the soul is absorbed within itself, while at the same time the focus of attention is permitted either to move from one aspect of its being to another, or is held fixed on just one aspect. Whatever the actual practice may be, the intention is to bring focus and concentration to the mind, which is otherwise in the habit of moving over a wide range of subjects.

The last two categories of *shukla-dhyāna* are for *kevalins* (omniscients), for those entering the final two stages (*guṇasthānas*) of spiritual liberation. In *shukla-dhyāna* of the penultimate *guṇasthāna* – in which all passions are conquered, and all *karma* is said to be destroyed except for the *karma* that keeps the soul in the body – all gross and subtle activities of the mind cease, together with the gross activity of the body. Here, the soul becomes deeply absorbed in itself.

The final *shukla-dhyāna* is experienced only momentarily, when the gross activities of the body come to an end, and the soul reaches omniscience before leaving the body and going to its final dwelling place. In this *dhyāna*, the soul is totally absorbed in itself, in complete stillness of body and mind.

Padamsingh Munirāj summarizes the fruits of these four *dhyānas*:

With *ārta-dhyāna*, a being goes to the lower species, such as birds and animals. *Raudra-dhyāna* sends you to hell; with *dharma-dhyāna* heaven is reached; and through *shukla-dhyāna*, you reach ultimate liberation.

Padamsingh Munirāj, Gyānasāra 13, NGPM p.12

The first two kinds of *dhyāna* reflect the negative aspects of the thinking processes concerned with material existence. The third, *dharma-dhyāna*, and the first two forms of *shukla-dhyāna* are reflections or meditations on spiritual truths according to Jain understanding. As such, they are of the same nature as the twelve *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās*. In these practices, the range of thought is narrowed down, but there is no intention to transcend thought or to make the mind still. Such meditations are time spent impressing certain spiritual truths upon the mind:

These twelve reflections (*anuprekshās*) form the foundation for one who is inclined towards *dharma-dhyāna*.

Āchārya Shivārya, Bhagavatī Ārādhanā, Mūla, BAMT p.1679

Traditional Jain texts differ as to who – mendicants or laypeople – should practise these various forms of meditation. However, most commentators agree that someone who practises *dharma-dhyāna* should have reached the fourth *guṇasthāna*, understood as a correct vision or understanding (*samyag-dṛiṣṭi* or *samyag-darshana*) of reality.

In addition to these four, there is a further fourfold categorization of *dhyāna*, first appearing in Jain literature in the *Yoga Shāstra* of Āchārya Hemachandra (c.1088–1173).¹² Written during the burgeoning of the Hindu and Buddhist tantric traditions, the *Yoga Shāstra* summarizes the basic yogic and tantric practices of the times, understood and practised from a Jain perspective. It describes the moral way of life and associated external disciplines, together with *āsanas* (postures), *prāṇāyāma* (control of the breath and subtle life energies), the acquisition of supernatural powers, meditation using *mantras*, and lastly a description of the various stages of meditation. The four categories of *dhyāna* are among the latter, and are listed as: *piṇḍastha-*, *padastha-*, *rūpastha-*, and *rūpatīta-dhyāna*. Although these four categories appear in other yogic and tantric texts, they have become especially well known in the Jain meditation tradition, with later Jain teachers and writers providing various interpretations.

At the start of his discussion, Hemachandra reiterates the foundation of spiritual practice:

The meditator (*dhyātā*), the purpose of meditation (*dhyāna*), and its goal – these three must first be known; because nothing can be achieved without first establishing the fundamentals.

He can be called a wise meditator (*dhyātā*) who maintains a good moral character, even at the cost of his own life; who regards others as his own self; who is never troubled by heat, cold, and storm; who longs to taste the elixir of *yoga* that makes one ageless and deathless; who is never overpowered by attachment and aversion; who is never sullied by anger, egoism, deceit, and greed; who is independent of others; who is established in the soul; who abstains from sensory pleasures; who is not infatuated with his own body; who is immersed in the ocean of non-attachment; who sees all things equally, whether friend or foe, gold or sand, praise or censure; who wishes well to both prince and pauper; who is compassionate to everybody; who has turned his back on the pleasures of the world; who is as unshakable as Mount Meru; who is as cool as the moon and as lonely as the wind.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:1–7; cf. YSHG pp.198–99

The four categories of *dhyāna* are differentiated according to their object of focus. The practices described all have their analogues in standard tantric texts, but are provided by Hemachandra with a Jain flavouring, though how much was of his devising is uncertain:

1. *Piṇḍastha-dhyāna*. *Lit.* practising (*stha*) physical (*piṇḍa*) meditation (*dhyāna*); meditation on visualized representations of the five elements (*tattvas*).¹³ For earth, he advises:

Imagine an ocean of milk as broad and long as the world in which we live. Imagine that in it there is a thousand-petalled lotus having the size of *Jambudvīpa*.¹⁴ In the centre of the lotus, imagine that there are filaments among which there is a yellow petal that has the magnitude of the Mount Meru. Imagine that on that petal there is a throne upon which you yourself are seated, annihilating your *karmas*. This is called reflection based on the element of earth (*parthivī*).

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:10–12; cf. YSHG p.200

This is followed by a complex visualization related to the fire element in which the practitioner begins by visualizing the sixteen-petalled lotus (*i.e.* *chakra*) in the navel. In the centre of the lotus is the *arham* mantra, which represents the *arahanta* (noble one, liberated one), the first of the five *parameshṭhins* or exalted beings deemed worthy of worship in the Jain tradition; on each of the sixteen petals the practitioner visualizes a Sanskrit syllable. Following this, the eight-petalled lotus in the heart is visualized. On each petal, one of the eight varieties of obscuring *karma*, according to Jain understanding, is imagined. In further complex visualization based upon the shape of the Sanskrit letters, fire is then imagined to issue from the central *arham* and also from outside the body:

The practitioner should imagine that he is burning away all the eight types of *karma* as well as his own body with the help of both types of fire, internal and external. Then he should be forever tranquil. This is called reflection (*dhāraṇā*) based on the element of fire (*agni*).

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:17–18; cf. YSHG p.201

Meditation on fire is followed by instructions for meditation upon air and water:

Then, one should imagine a fierce wind that fills the gaps or empty spaces in all the three worlds, that shakes the mountains and agitates the oceans. He should bring about tranquillity by focused practice....

Imagine a sky from which a rain of nectar is falling from numerous clouds. Then remember *vaṃ*, which is the mystic syllable governing

the element of water, formed of a crescent and a dot. Visualize that – with the nectar-like water produced by the sacred syllable *vaṃ* – the ashes of the body and *karmas*, spread over the whole expanse of the sky, are being washed away. By this means, peace is brought to the water element. This is called reflection belonging to the element of water (*varuṇa*).

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:19–22; cf. YSHG p.202

He concludes:

The practitioner should use a purified mind to focus the soul (*ātmā*) – which is now free from the seven basic constituents of the body – as possessing the splendour of the full moon and resembling that of an omniscient. Thereafter he should visualize his soul as seated on a throne shining with all the excellences, having the benevolent glory that destroys all *karma*, and being formless. This is reflection on the fundamental reality. The *yogī* who uses this practice (*abhyāsa*) called *piṇḍastha* enjoys eternal bliss.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:23–25; cf. YSHG p.203

Hemachandra then indicates the results enjoyed by one who practises such meditation:

A *yogī* who daily and constantly practises this type of *piṇḍastha* practice (*abhyāsa*) is never affected by wicked spells, harmful teachings, and the power of *mantras* and *maṇḍalas*. Devils, goblins, witches, demons, and meat eaters cannot tolerate the lustre, the aura of this *yogī*, and are instantly subdued. Moreover, rogue elephants, lions, *sharabhas* (powerful mythical eight-legged beasts), and snakes remain at a distance from him.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 7:26–28; cf. YSHG pp.203–4

2. Padastha-dhyāna. *Lit.* practising (*stha*) syllable (*pada*) meditation (*dhyāna*); meditation on the letters or syllables of the Sanskrit alphabet. In this form of tantric visualization, Hemachandra advises visualizing a sixteen-petalled lotus in the region of the navel, a twenty-four-petalled lotus in the heart, and an eight-petalled lotus in the throat. On these forty-eight petals, the meditator places the vowels and consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet. A number of such exercises are recommended, for instance:

Imagine an eight-petalled lotus below the region of the navel. On the first petal, place the sixteen vowels. On each of the seven remaining petals, place one each of the seven groups of consonants referred to in the earlier stanzas. On each of the eight intervening spaces between

the petals, place *hrīm*, the syllable that symbolizes praise of the liberated. On the tips of the petals, place *Aum hrīm*. In the centre of the lotus, place *arham*, white as snow, which purifies the mind merely by being uttered.

This *arham* should be repeated in the mind – fast at first, then drawn out, then short, and lastly as a subtle sound (*sūkshma dhvani*) understood to enter the glands (*i.e. chakras*) near the navel, the heart and the throat, and moving further with decreasing intensity.

Then, by focusing on that sound, imagine that the soul is immersed in waves of milky white nectar arising from the fire aspect (*kalā*) (of the navel lotus). Then imagine a lake of nectar and place the soul on the sixteen-petalled lotus arising from that lake. Visualize sixteen goddesses of wisdom adorning the sixteen petals. Then for a long time visualize that the milky white nectar dripping out of a brilliant crystal pitcher is being sprinkled over the soul. Thereafter meditate on *arham*, the crystal clear first syllable of the holiest of *mantras*.

Then with increasing intensity and mental repetition of the word, “*so’ham, so’ham,*” non-stop, experience the soul merging with the Supersoul. Then the practitioner should think that he is inseparable from the pure soul – omniscient, devoid of attachment, aversion and illusion, adored by the gods, and preaching in the religious assemblage. In this manner, the meditator (*dhyānī*) attains the state of liberation and destroys all his *karmas*.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 8:6–17; cf. YSHG pp.207–8

Describing a similar practice, he adds:

Then shift slowly from the tangible and focus on that which is intangible. After some time an inner light, which is beyond the physical senses and is unending, will appear. In this manner, progress is made from the tangible to the intangible. Those sages who perfect this type of meditation attain their desire.

Also, one should meditate with suspended breath on *Aum*, which is the sole cause of the *Shabda brahma* (the transcendent Sound), which envelops the five *parameshṭhins*, along with all the vowels and consonants, and which is saturated with the nectar dripping from the digit (*kalā*) of the moon contained in the head.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 8:27–30; cf. YSHG p.211

In Indian and tantric mythology, the “digit (*kalā*) of the moon” symbolizes the immortal part or aspect, in this case, of the soul.

Hemachandra then goes on to advocate use of the primary Jain *mantra*, the *pañcha-parameshṭhin namaskāra mantra*, which consists of a salutation to each of the five classes of divine beings, according to Jain belief.¹⁵

3. *Rūpastha-dhyāna*. Lit. practising (*stha*) form (*rūpa*) meditation (*dhyāna*); meditation on the imagined form of an *arahanta parameshṭhin* with the help of an idol or image. Hemachandra describes this as visualization of an enlightened *jina*, providing some detail for the meditator's imagination:

He (the *jina*) is face to face with liberation (*moksha*); he has annihilated all his *karmas*; his sermons emanate in the four directions; he has given the blessing of fearlessness to all living beings in the three worlds; he is adorned with three (celestial) parasols one above the other, as splendid as the moon; he has a halo behind him that makes the orb of the sun pale into insignificance; he has divine drums being beaten all around him; he is surrounded by waves of surpassing music; he is surrounded by *ashoka* trees, humming with the musical sound of bees and insects; he is seated in the centre on a throne; he is fanned on both sides by two chowries; ... he is full to the brim with the possession of all manner of excellence; he is shining with omniscience; and he has taken his seat ... in the centre of the divine assemblage. Meditation upon such external characteristics (of the *jina*) is known as *rūpastha-dhyāna*.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 9:1–4, 7; cf. *YSHG* pp.225–26

Such meditation, he says, can also be induced by contemplation on the idol of a *jina* or *Tīrthankara*:

One who contemplates without blinking and with steady gaze upon the idol of the revered *jīneshvara*, purging his mind of its impurities; who is devoid of the blemish of negative thinking and sentiments such as attachment, hatred, delusion, nescience; who is lovable, attractive, possessing all the excellent characteristics; ... who gives delight to the eyes; and from whose eyes radiates a marvellous bliss – he is in possession of *rūpastha-dhyāna*.

By the practice of *rūpastha-dhyāna*, the meditating *yogī* who identifies himself with the omniscient, finds himself to be an omniscient. “The omniscient on whom I am meditating is myself.”

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 9:8–12; cf. *YSHG* p.227

4. *Rūpatīta-dhyāna*. Lit. real form (*rūpatīta*) meditation (*dhyāna*); meditation on the formless ‘form’ of the pure, intangible, blissful, and liberated soul. Hemachandra writes:

Concentration on the intangible, blissful, formless, unblemished, liberated soul is called the *rūpatīta-dhyāna*. With the help of and by constantly meditating upon the formless, pure and liberated one, the *yogī* ascends in a state of bliss in which the identities of the achieved and the achiever become merged into one.

When the *yogī* devotes himself to and is absorbed in meditation (*dhyāna*) on the liberated Supersoul, in the absence of any tangible dependence, he becomes dissolved in the liberated soul. Upon dissolution of the actor and the act, he rises up into union with the goal – the liberated Supersoul. This complete integration, in which the soul of the *yogī* who practises profound meditation (*dhyāna*), inseparably dissolves into the Supersoul, is called the state of unification.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 10:1–4; cf. YSHG pp.229–30

Hemachandra then concludes:

Beginning at first with the *piṇḍastha-dhyāna*, one should progress in stages to profound meditation (*vichint*). One should also progress from meditation on the gross (*sthūla*) to the subtle (*sūkshma*), and from what is seen (*lakshya*) to what is unseen (*alakshya*). Practising in this progressive manner, the *yogī* soon comprehends the ultimate Reality.

The meditating *yogī*, absorbed in the four kinds of meditation, realizes the fundamental nature of the world and ultimately purifies his soul.

Hemachandra, Yoga Shāstra 10:5–6; cf. YSHG p.230

Not all Jain texts have taken the categorizing approach to *dhyāna*. Some have spoken in more general terms. According to the *Dhyāna Sūtra* of the *Samansuttam*, a twentieth-century consensus text, written in Jain Prakrit and assembled from traditional sources:

Meditation (*jhāna*) is enjoined on a monk (*sādhu*)
as the most vital part of his religion (*dhamma*),
like the head of a body or the roots of a tree.

A steady state of mind constitutes meditation (*jhāna*),
while an active mind might be engaged
either in contemplation (*bhāvanā*),
or deep reflection (*aṇupehā*), or thinking (*cintā*).

As salt dissolves upon contact with water,
so, when the mind becomes absorbed in meditation (*jhāna*),
does the fire of the soul shine brightly,
burning auspicious and inauspicious *karmas*.

If a person is free from attachment, hatred, delusion,
and activities of the mind, speech and body,
he becomes filled with the fire of meditation (*jhāna*)
that burns up auspicious and inauspicious *karmas*.

He who is pure in body and thought, and who concentrates his mind,
seated in a comfortable posture, facing the east or the north,
enjoys the absorption of a perfect meditator (*jhāyin*).

Seated in the *palyanka* posture (cross-legged),
he should cease all activities of mind, speech, and body,
fix the gaze of his eyes on the tip of his nose,
and slow down his expiration and inspiration.

Having condemned all his evil conduct,
having begged forgiveness from all living beings,
having renounced negligence (of the soul),
having steadied his mind, and having eliminated all his sins –
He should then apply himself to becoming a meditator (*jhāyin*).

In the case of monks who have steadied
all their mental, vocal, and bodily activity, and
who have thoroughly concentrated their minds on meditation (*jhāna*),
it makes no difference whether they live in a village full of people
or in an empty forest.

A monk devoted to penance
and wishing to practise meditation (*samāhi*, absorption)
should entertain neither pleasant nor unpleasant thoughts
concerning the objects of the senses.

A monk becomes quite steady in his meditation (*jhāna*)
if he has thoroughly understood the nature of mundane existence,
is devoid of all attachment, fearless, desireless,
and has developed an attitude of indifference to the world.

A meditator (*joi*) who, while in the human form,
meditates (*jhāyati*) upon the soul
and is equipped with supreme knowledge and faith,
is a (real) meditator;
He puts an end to all his sins and becomes free
from conflicting feelings of pleasure and pain. . . .

Undertake no bodily act, utter no word, and think no thought:
thus will you become steady.

Certainly, supreme meditation (*jhāna*) is present in a soul
that is engaged in concentration on itself.

A mind engaged in meditation (*jhāna*) is not disturbed
by miseries born of the passions, nor those born of mental activity,
nor by jealousy, remorse, sorrow, and so on.

A brave (monk) is neither moved nor frightened
by affliction and calamity;
His mind does not become infatuated in the slightest degree,
not even by heavenly illusions.

As fire fanned by the wind rapidly burns up long-accumulated fuel,
so does the fire of meditation (*jhāna*)
destroy the unlimited fuel of *karma* in the twinkling of an eye.

Samansuttam 29:484–94, 501–4; cf. *SSJV*

The *Ādi Purāṇa* describes *dhyāna* as the primary means of burning *karma* and attaining liberation:

Of all the means to attain salvation (*moksha*), meditation (*dhyāna*) is the best. . . . It is the primary means of destroying *karma* through action. . . . When all consequences (*praṇidhāna*) are stilled in the soul with single-pointed attention, that is called *dhyāna*, and only such *dhyāna* is the means for liberation. . . . Sages (*ṛishis*) and seers (*munis*) have said that endless happiness is the fruit of meditation (*dhyāna*). . . . Just as the winds disperse the clouds, even so the clouds of *karma* disappear when the wind of contemplation (*dhyāna*) blows. Just as the power of incantation can draw out venom from within the body, so also does the power of contemplation (*dhyāna*) eliminate the poison of *karma*. Therefore, seekers of salvation (*mumukshu*) should constantly endeavour to practise contemplation (*dhyāna*). . . . The contentment and bliss obtained through meditation (*dhyāna*) is the ultimate luxury apart from the many extraordinary powers received as by-products.

Jinasena, Ādi Purāṇa 21:5, 7, 132, 212–15, 237; cf. *APJ1* pp.474, 488, 497, 499

Recent developments within the Jain tradition have seen the emergence of meditational techniques that can be practised by anyone, such as *prekshā-dhyāna* (self-perception or keen-perception meditation) and the *dhyāna* associated with the *arhum yoga* system. *Prekshā-dhyāna* was introduced in 1975 by a *Shvetāmbara Terāpanthī*, Acharya Mahaprajna. The technique involves focusing awareness in one's inner consciousness or being, in order to rid the mind of emotions, passions, and negative tendencies. It includes breathing exercises, relaxation of the body and mind, awareness of bodily sensations, and perception of the *chakras* and inner lights. Like Buddhist insight (Pa. *vipassanā*) meditation, the practice is independent of any

particular doctrine, and is open to anyone, whatever their religious beliefs. A variant of *prekshā-dhyāna* that is more related to Jain teaching, involves the recitation of *mantras* and focused meditation on the eternal truths as understood by Jainism, such as the transience of life, the essential solitariness of existence and so on, such topics being a part of the traditional Jain *anuprekshās* or *bhāvanās*.

See also: **anuprekshā, bhāvanā, Chán (►4), jhāna.**

1. See **chán, jhāna, zen.**
2. E.g. *Amṛitanāda Upanishad* 6–8; *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 1, 41; *Kshurikā Upanishad* 1, 21; *Maitrī Upanishad* 6:18; *Maṇḍala-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 1:1; *Shāṇḍilya Upanishad* 1:1–3; *Tejobindu Upanishad* 1:15–16, 36; *Trishikhi-brāhmaṇa Upanishad* 1:32; *Varāha Upanishad* 5:11–12.
3. *Kaivalya Upanishad* 1:2.
4. See also *Brahma Upanishad* 18, *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 22–24.
5. *Maitreya Upanishad* 2:3; cf. *SUAR* p.180.
6. *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* 22–24; cf. *YU* p.155.
7. *Yogatattva Upanishad* 24–27; cf. *YU* p.306.
8. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 6:18–19; cf. *GSV* p.54.
9. *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 9:28.
10. *Tattvārtha Sūtra* 9:27–46.
11. E.g. A. Chakravarti Nayanar, *Commentary on Kundakunda's Pañchāstikāyasāra* 41:4, *PBCK* p.37.
12. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 7–10, *YSHG* pp.198–234.
13. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 7:9, *YSHG* p.199.
14. Generally said to be 100,000 *yojanas* in extent, a *yojana* being a mythical unit of measurement, variously calculated at between two and twenty miles.
15. Hemachandra, *Yoga Shāstra* 8:32ff., *YSHG* p.210ff.

dhyān(a) yoga (S/H) *Lit.* practice or *yoga* of contemplation (*dhyāna*); part of the process by which *samādhi* (absorption) is attained, according to Patañjali's *Yoga Sūtras*; sometimes equated with *rāja yoga*; a term used in the *Bhagavad Gītā* for a meditative state of consciousness.¹ See **dhyāna**.

1. *Bhagavad Gītā* 18:52.

dhyānī (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* one who practises *dhyāna*. See **dhyāna**.

dialectic (Gk. *dialektikē*). From *dialegesthai* (to converse); among the ancient Greek philosophers, a form of logical argumentation or dialogue; a method

of debate intended to reconcile different viewpoints or to expose contradictions; a method of discussion consisting of questions and answers that is said by Aristotle to have been invented by Zēnō of Elea¹ (though present in Indic philosophical literature since ancient times); the Socratic method of dialogue, in which the mind is led to a steadily higher understanding of Reality by a process of reason and logic; the search for the essential Reality underlying things; the quest for the Essence, the Origin, the Source, or First Principle of things, upon which all other natural laws or principles depend; hence, meditation on the mental world of ideal forms or archetypes; higher mental or spiritual training or discipline, divorced from the senses; spiritual meditation; a term with a spread of meaning, even in ancient times; etymologically related to '*dialogismos* (dialogue)', a term used in modern Greece for thought, reflection, and meditation.

Dialectic is distinguished from debate in the sense that the parties involved in dialectic each seek to arrive at the truth of something through a sharing and modifying of individual viewpoints. In a debate, the parties already have an established viewpoint of which they seek to persuade the other, and a third party (judge, jury, audience, *etc.*) may be required to decide upon the issue. In dialectic, both parties in the dialogue seek to increase their understanding of the subject; in debate, one seeks to defeat the other. Dialectic is hence a win-win kind of conversation, while debate is founded upon a win-lose premise. Dialectic differs similarly from rhetoric in that rhetoric is the attempt by one individual to win others over to his or her point of view by means of oratory, which may appeal to fact or fiction, reason or emotion, and so on.

Dialectic generally contains one or more of three components. Firstly, discussion and analysis of some viewpoint, leading to a realization that it is founded upon contradictions. Secondly, a quest for likenesses and parallels in which the participants seek to find those elements in something that are found elsewhere, thereby increasing their all-round understanding of the matter. Lastly, analysis and subdivision into smaller parts, as a means of developing a greater understanding of something. While in the Platonic sense, dialectic is generally a dialogue, the term can also be applied to a personal thought process or deliberation in which one 'discusses' something within oneself.

The common interpretation of Greek philosophy defines dialectic as 'logical argumentation', because this is the form that Plato uses to describe and explore the nature of reality. Dialectic certainly does include this process of debate, but a close reading of the texts indicates that it also includes something purer, less discursive, and more encompassing. Just as the word 'meditation' can refer to both discursive cogitation as well as focused, interior recollection and contemplation, so too does dialectic refer to both. In the higher sense, dialectic is a kind of non-discursive intellectual consideration and mental contemplation of something; a quest for understanding of the essential principle or idea that lies behind something, which leads to pure awareness or

contemplation (*noēsis*) itself; a process of mental abstraction that attempts to apprehend the archetypal form or idea behind a thing divorced from its expression at the sensory level.

Much of the problem encountered when trying to understand Greek mysticism lies in the nomenclature. *Nous*, for example, often conventionally translated by scholars as ‘intellect’, actually refers to the divine and spiritual part of a human being, and in many instances would be better rendered as ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’, as did Latin writers until the fifth or sixth centuries, who sometimes translated *nous* as *spiritus*. Indeed, the Intelligence that emanates from the divine Source is sometimes called the divine *Nous*, and translations such as ‘Intellectual Principle’ hardly convey the fullness of its meaning. There are parallel difficulties with Greek terms for soul, mind, thought, reason, and reasoning. In Greek mysticism, all these terms can have either a mundane or a spiritual meaning, something that is altogether lost in a literal translation.

In Plato’s mystical teachings, dialectic is a path or method (*methodos*, journey, road) of inner purification that leads to detachment from inherited, socially defined or preconceived attitudes, beliefs and ways of thought, and from the emotions and senses. This prepares the soul for contemplation (*theōria*). It is a means of replacing false notions with true understanding through spiritual insight. Its preceding stage is that of moral purification; and the two forms of purification (*katharsis*) are for Plato the true education and conversion from the senses to the perception of spiritual reality.² The purpose of dialectic is to prepare the soul for contemplation of the higher forms (*logoi*, *eidē*), patterns or ideas (*ideai*), terms referring to the higher or more subtle spiritual realities or archetypes through which this world comes into being, and of which it is a reflection.

Plato’s word *idea* is derived from *idein* (to see), and can be loosely translated as ‘visions of reality’. The soul has to habituate itself to the brightness of the inner visions step by step, and it is the job of dialectic to ease it gently through the transition by starting out with the contemplation of beauty in the sensual world, then moving on to the contemplation of the beauty of souls, and only then reaching the realm of forms or patterns:³

It occurred to me that I must guard against the same sort of risk that people run when they look at the sun, and watch it during an eclipse. For some of them ruin their eyes unless they look at its image in water or something of the sort. I was concerned that something like that would happen to myself, and was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to comprehend them with any of my senses. So I thought that I must have recourse to forms (*logoi*), and try to comprehend in them the truth about things.

Plato, Phaedo 99d; cf. CDP p.81

Dialectic is not itself contemplation of the forms, but arouses the *nous* (spirit) to ascend to that vision, and develops the abilities of the spiritual or divine aspect of a human being, *i.e. nous*.⁴

The higher purpose of dialectic is to challenge the mind and lead it beyond words and intellectual concepts to a subtler realm of spiritual understanding that is not dependent upon concepts, and brings one into direct contact with Reality. In Plato's *Republic*, Glaucōn, who is not yet ready to subject himself to the rigour required to attain such a goal, is told by Socratēs:

No longer, dear Glaucōn, will you be able to follow, though I would do my part. And, if I could, I would show you, no longer an image (*eikōn*) of what we are discussing but the Truth (*to alēthes*) itself, as it appears to me; though whether rightly or not I cannot truly say. But you would have seen something like Reality, of that I am confident.

Plato, Republic 7:533a; cf. DP2 p.398, RBS2 pp.200–1

The dialogues that Plato records in his works use philosophical language in a special way, so that even though the conceptual mind (*dianoia*) is involved, the higher awareness (*noēsis*) of the *nous* (spirit) is awakened, and the dialogue “draws the *nous* towards Essence and Reality”.⁵ The format that dialectic takes may be that of conversation (*dialegesthai*, to converse), but its esoteric significance lies in providing a framework in which “thought can outthink itself”,⁶ *i.e.* it is a tool by means of which one can transcend the conceptual mind.

There is a further significant aspect to dialectic. Ideally, the process requires one of the partners in the dialogue to have an advanced vision of Reality, for it is the soul in its highest manifestation as *nous* that receives spiritual guidance from an advanced soul. The dialogue between Socratēs and his disciples is a soul-to-soul communion, also using words, but aiming to go beyond them. As he says: “You and I are conversing with each other soul to soul, while making use of words.”⁷

This ‘soul talk’ is possible in its most elevated extent when conducted by someone who has seen the Good; it is not an argument, it is talk by someone who has had first-hand knowledge, vision or interior experience of the Good, and its purpose is to lead the other towards that same experience. It is the only form of *logos* (discussion, form of words) that turns into *ergon* (action, recollection, realization), because it serves as a reminder of what the soul already knows.⁸ As Plato says, it is “veritably written in the soul of the listener”,⁹ and inspires a person towards imitation of the “best of men”.¹⁰ It is like a question and answer session with a realized soul, who leads his questioners around in circles, moving them steadily towards the light of understanding, so that in the end they relinquish intellect and reasoned thought as their means of understanding, and simply get the point.

The development of the faculty of spiritual vision, which begins with the visible and moves on to the invisible, as described by Plato, is the best analogy for “that great power of dialectic, which through *logos* (interior converse or communion) leaves all sense perception behind”¹¹ and is moved “by the forms (*eidē*) themselves”, advancing “through them and into them”.¹²

Dialectic is the process of turning the soul from the realm of shadows and darkness (opinions) towards the light of inner spiritual sight. Coupled with a preparatory training in music, mathematics, geometry, and so on, it works towards purifying the soul and allowing it to restore its original nature and remember its origin. It is a means, not the goal:

When a person starts on the discovery of the Real, not by sense perception, but solely through dialectic, not giving up until he apprehends with pure spirit (*noēsis*) itself what the absolute Good is, he at length finds himself at the Source of the spiritual (*noēton*) world. . . .

When a man does not know his own Source, and when the conclusion and intermediate steps are also constructed out of he knows not what, how can he imagine that such a fabric of convention can ever become knowledge? Dialectic, and dialectic alone, goes directly to the Source, and is the only kind of knowledge that does away with hypotheses in order to find certainty. And it is literally true that when the eye of the soul (*psychēs omma*) is sunk in barbaric mud, she (dialectic) gently draws it forth, and leads it up.

Plato, Republic 7:532a–b, 533c–d; cf. DP2 pp.397–98, PAC2 p.120

The intention of dialectic is to draw the soul out of the mud of chaotic and compulsive thinking and the intellectual analysis of sensory events and phenomena into the light of pure consciousness and understanding. In this perception, the normal reasoning processes that underlie other types of knowledge are no longer useful. In fact, knowledge acquired from a study of sensory phenomena does not come into the category of true knowledge, because it is dealing with shadows or reflections, like the shadows cast by a fire upon a wall in Plato’s parable of the cave,¹³ which the observers, prevented from seeing the originating light, take to be reality:

(Dialectic) is the release from bonds, and the turning away from the shadows to the images (*eidōlon*) that cast them, and thence to the light of the fire, and from there to the ascent out of the cave into the sunlight. . . . All this labour in the disciplines we have mentioned has the power to lead the best part of the soul up to the vision (*thea*) of the highest among realities (*i.e.* God, the Good).

Plato, Republic 7:532b–c; cf. RBS2 pp.196–99

The ascending path of dialectic is only one aspect of the journey, because any path that leads up can also lead down. Hence, dialectic also includes the downward path of a soul returning to the body. The enlightened soul, after having completed the inner pilgrimage (*theōria*) and having attained the Good, returns to teach others. This is the downward path of dialectic: returning to the body and using language to instruct human beings.

Dialectic is closely intertwined with contemplation of the world of forms, patterns, or ideas. Before descending into the human body, the soul is in direct contact with these archetypal forms. Once in the body, with the help of remembrance (*anamnēsis*, i.e. meditation) and the process of purification through dialectics, the soul re-ascends towards the forms and is able to grasp these universal realities by shedding its individualistic tendencies. The soul then regains the happy state it had before its fall. By engaging in the most refined aspects of dialectics (discrimination and synthesis), the soul attains clear thinking and a universal insight. This insight coincides with the last phase in which it grasps the totality of Being, and develops a simplicity of vision in which it sees the One in the Many, the One in everything.¹⁴

Since dialectic leads a person beyond concepts and intellectual thought, Socratēs also speaks of the “song which it (dialectic) performs”,¹⁵ a song that does not lend itself to a verbal explanation. Thus, mathematics and other methods of training the mind and of describing things are only tools to make a person receptive to this song:

Don’t we know that all these things (mathematics, *etc.*) are only preludes to the hymn that we must apprehend?

Plato, Republic 7:531d

Nevertheless, while the ability to describe things or to “render ... a true account” is an essential aspect of the process called dialectic, it is not dialectic *per se*. Specialists in astronomy, acoustics or mathematics, for example, may collect empirical data and describe various aspects of the phenomenal world, but they are not necessarily seeking to understand the underlying reality behind the data. Their expertise is thus the converse of what the dialectician seeks. As Socratēs discusses with Glaucon:

“For you surely do not suppose that experts in these matters are dialecticians?”

“No, by *Zeus*,” he said, “except a very few whom I have met.”

“But do you suppose,” I said, “that men who are unable to render and receive a true account (*logos*) in the course of discussion would ever know anything of the things we say must be known?”

Plato, Republic 7:531d–e; cf. CDP p.764

To “render and receive a true account (*logos*)”, to be a participant in philosophical dialogue and to perceive the truth of things, is a commonplace Platonic code for ‘dialectics’.¹⁶ For Plato, *logos*, as the spoken word and reasoned dialogue, which is another meaning of dialectics, is an important form of spiritual guidance.

Dialectic, as Socratēs maintains, is the “copestone of the sciences: no other science can be set higher; the nature of knowledge can go no further”.¹⁷ It is the highest form of knowledge (*megiston mathēma*), by which all other forms are illuminated. It is a mental discipline that enables a person to have direct perception of the Source, beyond the realm of the senses. Socratēs does add, however, that intellectual training in the sciences, such as mathematics, astronomy, geometry, and harmonics, is a useful tool, leading on to dialectic:

(Dialectic employs) as handmaids and helpers, in this work of conversion (turning inward the eye of the soul), the studies and sciences that we have been discussing.

Plato, Republic 7:533d; cf. DP2 p.398

Dialectic, he asserts, is aided by a disciplined study of certain physical sciences, which serve as preparation for the direct perception of the Source or First Principle. The sciences of number, mathematics and geometry, for example, are comprised of the attempt to solve puzzles or problems. In itself, this is not dialectic; but to a truly thoughtful person such puzzles lead on to the questions, “How do all these problems arise? Do they have an ultimate Source?” By this means, they prepare the student for the contemplation of the origins of number and form in the “realm of forms”. Such contemplation reveals the relationship between the One and the Many, providing the ultimate solution to the existence of such problems by revealing how the complexities of material life actually come into being. Likewise, astronomy and harmonics are said to prepare the student for “true astronomy” – the experience of things beyond the physical heavens:

It is through puzzles ... that we study astronomy; but if we are to have a part in true astronomy, we will let be the things in the heavens, and so convert to right use from uselessness that natural indwelling intelligence (*phronimos*) of the soul.

Plato, Republic 7:530b–c; cf. CDP p.762, DP2 p.395

Not every person has this capacity, however, and Socratēs comments that even those possessing the most “philosophic spirit” give up philosophy when faced with its most difficult part – “dialectic”. Intellectual discussion is easy compared to mental discipline and spiritual meditation, and there are many who simply cannot take to the latter, even among seekers of the higher Reality:

At present, the students of philosophy are quite young; beginning when they are hardly past childhood, they devote only the interval before they engage in business and moneymaking to such pursuits; and even those of them who are reputed to have most of the philosophic spirit, when they come within sight of the greatest difficulty of the subject, I mean dialectic, take themselves off.

Plato, Republic 6:498a; cf. CDP p.733, DP2 p.358

Dialectic, then, as used by Socratic philosophers (lovers of wisdom), is a process that may begin with the scientific examination of physical phenomena and relationships, but ends in the practice of meditation, by which the true philosopher comes to know the Origin of all these seeming puzzles. By means of dialectic, he rises out of the cave of shadows and illusions,¹⁸ contemplates the source of true knowledge and the mental realm of higher realities,¹⁹ and ultimately finds certainty in direct experience of the Source Itself.²⁰ Dialectic is thus a means to spiritual realization, although many later purely intellectual philosophers, focusing on its lower aspect of reason and debate, have regarded it as an end in itself.

Six centuries after Plato, Plotinus, the great interpreter of Plato in early Christian times, also understood dialectic in a mystical manner. To Plotinus, dialectic is both the perception of the Eternal at the heart of all things, as well as the means of access to the spiritual realms, the “meadows of Truth”.²¹ As he says, to experience the “One” requires a faculty “superior to knowledge”:

Our awareness of that One is not by way of reasoned knowledge or of intellectual perception, as with other intelligible things, but by way of a presence superior to knowledge.

Plotinus, Enneads 6:9.4, PA6 pp.314–15

Dialectic is the deeper understanding of God’s presence in all things as well as the spiritual practice or meditation by which this is more fully comprehended through direct experience. First, Plotinus defines the nature of dialectic as the means of apprehending the origins and divine Source of things. At the outset, it may wander “in the realm of sense”, but once it is faced with experience of the higher Reality, it “settles down” in peace:

This science, this dialectic . . . what, in sum, is it? It is the method or discipline that brings within it the power of pronouncing with final truth upon the nature and interrelationship of things. . . .

Dialectic treats also of the Good and the not-Good, and of the particulars that fall under each, and of what is eternal and what the not-eternal – and these it understands, not by seeming knowledge (sense knowledge), but with authentic knowledge (mystic experience).

All this accomplished, it (dialectic) gives up its wanderings in the realm of sense, and settles down in the spiritual world (*noētos*) and there attends to its own particular activity. It has then abandoned the entire realm of deceit and falsity (this world), and pastures the soul in the meadows of Truth. . . .

Now it rests: instructed and satisfied as to the Being in that sphere, it is no longer busy about many things; it has arrived at Unity and it contemplates. It leaves to another kind of knowledge (*i.e.* intellectual logic) all the tangle of premises and conclusions called the art of reasoning, much as it leaves the art of writing. Some of the matter of logic, no doubt, it considers necessary – to clear the ground – but it makes itself the judge, here as in everything else. What it finds of value, it uses. Anything it finds superfluous, it leaves to whatever department of learning or practice may turn that matter to account.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:3.4; cf. PEC p.11

Dialectic seeks the primal Origin of things, and the origin of dialectic is the primal Origin, the divine *Nous* itself. Therefore, it stands above the multiplicity of “petty details”. Dialectic encompasses the knowledge imparted in schools through traditional methods, but its knowledge goes beyond that and aspires to the unchanging Truth:

Dialectic . . . has no knowledge of propositions – collections of words – but it knows the truth and, in that knowledge, knows what the schools call their propositions; for it knows, above all, the nature and functioning of the soul. . . . All that comes before it, it perceives with the clarity of sense perception, leaving the petty details to whatever other science cares to deal with them.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:3.5; cf. PEC p.11

And what is the relationship of dialectic to philosophy, understood as the quest for divine wisdom? It is the means by which the principles of philosophy are realized:

What, then, is philosophy? Philosophy is the most precious thing. Is dialectic, then, the same as philosophy? It is the precious part of philosophy. We must not think of it as the mere tool of the metaphysician. Dialectic does not consist of bare theories and rules: it deals with verities. The things that are real are, as it were, its essence, or at least it proceeds systematically towards those things of Reality; and it possesses itself, in one step, of both the ideas and of the things that are.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:3.5; cf. PEC p.11

Dialectic is thus the converse of sophism, of intellectual cleverness that does not apprehend Reality. It automatically recognizes the distinction between direct experience of Reality and intellectual obfuscation. It sees clearly the origins of that confusion because it knows the way, the “nature and functioning”, by which a human being is put together. In fact, dialectic illuminates all aspects of human reasoning and behaviour.

So although it might be thought that dialectic is too abstruse to have any relevance in everyday life, in fact the opposite is true. Dialectic brings out all the positive qualities in a person, leading the way to awareness of one’s own thinking and to becoming a real human being, because:

While the other virtues bring reason to bear upon particular experiences and acts, the virtue of Wisdom (*i.e.* the virtue particularly indicated by dialectic) is a certain super-reasoning much closer to the Universal; for it deals with (such abstract ideas as) the mutual relationship of things, the choice of time for action and inaction, the adoption of this course, the rejection of that other; wisdom and dialectic have the task of presenting all things as universals and stripped of matter for treatment by the understanding.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:3.6; cf. PEC pp.11–12

Indeed, human virtue and morality, without an understanding of meditation and spirituality – of “dialectic and philosophy” – are imperfectly understood. Human virtue and proficiency in dialectic go hand-in-hand. A perfect adept in dialectic, a spiritual master, automatically possesses all human virtues:

But can these inferior kinds of virtue exist without dialectic and philosophy? Yes – but only imperfectly and inadequately. And is it possible to be a wise man and a dialectician without these lower virtues? It would not happen: the lower will spring either before or together with the higher. And it is likely that everyone normally possesses the natural virtues from which, when wisdom steps in, the perfected virtues develop. So wisdom follows after the natural virtues, and so perfects the character; or rather, when the natural virtues exist, both orders, the natural and the higher, ripen side by side to their final perfection; or as the one advances it carries forward the other towards perfection.

Plotinus, Enneads 1:3.6; cf. PA1 pp.162–65, PEC p.12

See also: **logismos**, **Logos** (3.1), **meditation**.

1. Aristotle, *Fragment 65*, in Diogenes Laërtius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 9, *Zēnō* 4.
2. Andrew Louth, *Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, *OCM* pp.8–9.

3. Plato, *Symposium* 210ff.
4. Plato, *Republic* 7:524d.
5. Plato, *Republic* 7:523a; cf. *CDP* p.755.
6. Eva Brann, *The Music of the Republic*, *MRES* p.182.
7. Plato, *Alcibiadēs* I:130d; cf. *PCAH* pp.200–3.
8. See J. Sallis, *Being and Logos*, *BLPD* p.20.
9. Plato, *Phaedrus* 278a, *CDP* p.523.
10. Plato, *Phaedo* 118a.
11. Plato, *Republic* 7:532a.
12. Plato, *Republic* 6:511c.
13. Plato, *Republic* 7:514a–518b, 532b–d.
14. See A.J. Festugière, *Contemplation et vie contemplative*, *CVCP* pp.195–96.
15. Plato, *Republic* 7:532a.
16. See P. Shorey, *The Republic*, *RBS2* p.195 (n.f).
17. Plato, *Republic* 7:534e; cf. *DP2* p.400.
18. Plato, *Republic* 7:514a ff.
19. Plato, *Republic* 6:511b.
20. Plato, *Republic* 6:511b.
21. Plotinus, *Enneads* 1:3.4; cf. *PA1* pp.158–59; cf. Plato, *Phaedrus* 248b.

dǐng (C) *Lit.* an ancient cooking cauldron with two looped handles and usually three legs, sometimes four; a pot, a vessel; a vessel of offering, a sacrificial or ceremonial vessel; a receptacle for cooking or the preparation of mineral or herbal concoctions on a fire; used since ancient times in ceremonial feasts, rites, and offerings to deities; also one of the sixty-four hexagrams of the *Yijing*.

The earliest ornate bronze cauldron discovered dates back to the seventeenth century BCE (the beginning of the Chinese Bronze Age). Today, large bronze cauldrons are usually found in front of Buddhist and Daoist temples. Monks, priests and visitors burn incense in these cauldrons as part of a supplication to immortals, gods, and deities.

In Daoism, the *dǐng* (cauldron) together with the *lú* (furnace) become, in broad terms, the ‘laboratory’ of the human body, wherein *jīng-qì-shén* (vital essence, subtle life energy, spirit) are refined and transmuted. *Jīng* is transmuted into *qì*, and *qì* into *shén* until the spirit is merged with the Emptiness or Void (*xū*) that is the *Dào*. *Dǐng* is also used as a term for the lower, middle, and upper *dāntián* (elixir fields, bodily energy fields), these being understood as the sites for the first three stages of *nèidān* practice.

See also: **dǐnglú**.

dǐnglú (C) *Lit.* cauldron (*dǐng*) and stove (*lú*); crucible and furnace. The terms *dǐng* (cauldron), *fǔ* (earthen pot, crucible) and *lú* (stove, furnace) were originally

associated with *wàidān* (external alchemy) and its search for a chemical and/or herbal elixir (*dān*) of immortality. During the middle of the *Táng* dynasty (618–907), the Daoist school of *nèidān* (internal alchemy) diverged from *wàidān*, reinterpreting the terminology of *wàidān* in a spiritual manner. Thus the elixir of immortality was construed as awareness of one's innate and original spiritual nature, and its quest took the form of internal practices (meditation, visualization, breathing exercises, *etc.*) conducted within the furnace and crucible of the human body. In *nèidān* literature, *fǔ* – used widely in *wàidān* writings – became increasingly replaced by *dǐng* (cauldron).

In Daoist spiritual practice, the process of refinement and transmutation of the *sānbǎo* (three treasures) of *jīng-qì-shén* (vital essence, subtle life energy, spirit) takes place in the 'laboratory' of the human body. *Nèidān* texts often state that all the ingredients needed for the elixir (*dān*) are to be found within every human being. The individual is thus the alchemical laboratory or workshop.

More specifically, *dǐng* (cauldron) and *lú* (furnace) are interpreted either separately or as a single entity. As a single entity, *dǐnglú* – also known as *shénlú* (spiritual furnace) – represents the original One. It is the sacred source from which all things manifest. Separately, *dǐng* and *lú* are used to designate pairs of various complementary entities, such as body and mind, heart and kidneys, mercury and lead, the fiery furnace (*yáng*) and the receiving cauldron (*yīn*).

The common aspect of these is the separation and union of *yīn* and *yáng*. In alchemical language, *dǐng* (cauldron) symbolizes *yīn*, which includes body, earth, water, tiger, human mind, and the lower *dāntián* (elixir field). *Lú* (furnace) symbolizes *yáng*, which includes spirit, heaven, fire, dragon, the *Dào*-mind, and *níwán* (the upper *dāntián*). The elixir fields are aspects of the subtle energy system of the human body. Firing the furnace and heating the cauldron represent the interaction between these two spheres of energy or consciousness, which – through the harmonious union of *yīn* and *yáng* – produce the spiritual elixir (*dān*), also known as the *shèngtāi* (spiritual embryo), which is one's original, inherent, and potential spiritual awareness.

Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) offers an explanation of this process, linking many of the *wàidān* terms to the inner practices of *nèidān*. He associates the furnace with the body, and the cauldron with the mind, which becomes refined by the fire of spiritual practice:

Someone may ask, "What are the furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*)?"

Lǐ Qīng'ān (Lǐ Dàochún, C13th) said, "Body and mind are the cauldron (*dǐng*) and furnace (*lú*)." An alchemical scripture says, "First take heaven and earth as the cauldron (*dǐng*). Then gather together *yīn* and *yáng* and smelt them in it." Heaven is the mind; earth is the body. It is absurd that people nowadays make physical furnaces (*lú*) and cauldrons (*dǐng*). They are mistaken.

The furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*) are mind (*xīn*) and body (*shēn*). To cultivate refinement, there must be a body, within which energy and spirit can be collected without scattering and exercises can be carried out. This is cultivating the true by means of the false (*i.e.* the body). In this world, the items used for smelting and transformation are a furnace (*lú*) and a cauldron (*dǐng*).

Guānyīnzǐ (Yīn Xī, Guardian of the Pass, c.6th BCE) first spoke of the pot (*fǔ*). Later, the term evolved into furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*) to signify the body. . . . The *Cāntóng qì* ('Triplex Unity') mentioned many variations of the term including inner furnace (*nèilú*) and outer furnace (*wàilú*), but their essential meaning is the same.

Yú Yùwú (C14th) said, "The way of the elixir (*dān*) is to take the Great Void (*tàixū*) as the furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*). Within the Great Void, there is an inherent, natural, and subtle function." In the Great Void, there is neither self nor other, neither inside nor outside; how, then, can a furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*) adequately describe it? Yú Yùwú simply used the metaphor to illustrate a point. It is not his actual meaning.

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

In some interpretations of the symbolism, the cauldron (*dǐng*) and furnace (*lú*) are associated with earth (the body) and heaven (the spirit) respectively, or *vice versa*. In the *Yijing* (at least C9th BCE), hexagram fifty is called the '*dǐng* (cauldron)' and is composed of two component trigrams: fire (*lí*) above and wood (*xùn*) below. This hexagram represents the spiritualization of human nature, the development of spiritual wisdom and acquiescence to the will of heaven, where spiritual light (fire) assumes command over personal expression (wood).

Richard Wilhelm's twentieth-century translation and explanation of this hexagram suggests the idea of 'spiritual nourishment' where fire (spiritual nature) is nourished by wood (human nature), which is transformed by burning. Wilhelm says that this nurturing and spiritual transformation cannot be achieved without the guidance of a manifestation of the Divine in the form of a holy person (*i.e.* an enlightened master):

Here it is the wood that serves as nourishment for the flame, the spirit. All that is visible must grow beyond itself, extend into the realm of the invisible. Thereby it receives its true consecration and clarity, and takes firm root in the cosmic order.

Here we see civilization as it reaches its culmination in religion. The *dǐng* serves in offering sacrifice to God. The highest earthly values must be sacrificed to the Divine. But the truly Divine does not manifest itself apart from man. The supreme revelation of God appears in prophets and holy men. To venerate them is true veneration

of God. The will of God, as revealed through them, should be accepted in humility; this brings inner enlightenment and true understanding of the world, and this leads to great good fortune and success.

Richard Wilhelm, I Ching, ICW p.194

According to the *nèidān* school, *jīng*, *qì* and *shén* are transmuted through three successive phases by meditative practices. The resulting spiritual energy reaches its final stage in the head (the *níwán*), where the ‘immortal embryo (*xiāntāi*)’ is manifested. In another interpretation, the location of the cauldron is understood to progress through the three elixir fields (*dāntián*) in the body as the transmutation progresses, the upper location being referred to as the “precious cauldron (*yùdǐng*, jade cauldron)”:

While the stove (furnace) remains in the lower abdomen during the whole process of alchemy, the cauldron changes place, rising from the lower *dāntián* under the navel to the middle *dāntián* or solar plexus, and finally to the upper *dāntián* in the brain where it is called the ‘precious cauldron (*yùdǐng*)’... Thus, the lower, middle and upper *dāntián* successively become the cauldron, which means the cavity or psychic centre in which transmutation actually takes place.

Lu K’uan Yü (Charles Luk), Taoist Yoga, TYAI p.xiv

In yet another interpretation, the cauldron is viewed as the medium between the two seemingly incompatible entities of water (*yīn*) and fire (*yáng*), whose harmonization produces the spiritual elixir. Commenting on a poem by master Sūn Bù’èr (C12th) in which she refers to the creation as the “great smelting”, master Chén Yīngníng (C20th) explains that this “great smelting” is carried out by the ‘cauldron’ and ‘furnace’, by means of which *yáng* and *yīn* are fused in harmonious proportion in order to manifest the spiritual elixir:

The ‘great smelting’ originally referred to the smelting of the five metals (gold, silver, copper, iron, tin). It is now used to symbolize the great accomplishment of creation. Heaven and earth are the furnace (*lú*) and cauldron (*dǐng*). *Yīn* and *yáng* are the water and fire. The myriad things (*wànxàng*) are their castings...

For those who cultivate immortality, it is essential to collect the clear and spiritual energy (*qì*) of the Void, and refine and nurture it together with the spirit (*shén*) within. After a long time, spirit (*shén*) and energy (*qì*) will merge into one, and the great elixir will begin to manifest.

Chén Yīngníng, Sūn Bù’èr nǚgōng nèidān cìdìshī zhù, SBNN

See also: **jīng-qì-shén** (►1), **nèidān**.

drāvaṇī dhāraṇā (S/H) *Lit.* concentration (*dhāraṇā*) on the watery *chakra*; also called *āmbhasī* (watery) *dhāraṇā*;¹ one of five forms of *dhāraṇā* (concentration) practised in *haṭha yoga* to gain control over the five *chakras* below the eye centre and their associated *tattvas* of earth, water, fire, air, and *ākāsha*. In *drāvaṇī dhāraṇā*, concentration is held at the reproductive *chakra*, the centre associated with the water *tattva*. Why *drāvaṇī* (becoming fluid) is used in this context is uncertain, although ‘becoming fluid’ has an obvious association with water. See **haṭha yoga**.

1. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 3:69, 72.

drīṣṭī sādhana (S/H) *Lit.* practice (*sādhana*) of gazing (*drīṣṭī*); the yogic practice of steady contemplation upon something external, such as the flame of a candle, with the object of developing the faculty of inner vision, and then internalizing the external image. Further contemplation upon the mental image thus formed develops the power of inner concentration and the faculty of inner vision.

See also: **kasiṇa**, **nimitta**.

dukkhānupassanā (Pa) *Lit.* contemplation (*anupassanā*) of suffering (*dukkha*). See **anupassanā**.

Dzogchen (T) *Lit.* great (*chen*) perfection (*rdzogs*); great completeness; so-called because it is regarded as complete – nothing can be added to or subtracted from it; a phonetic rendering, transliterated in the Wylie system as *Rdzogs chen*; also known as *atiyoga*; the highest teaching and practice of the *Nyingma* school of Tibetan Buddhism and also of the *Bönpo* tradition; said to lead to consciousness of one’s own pure and intrinsic awareness (*rig pa*) and to liberation not only from *samsāra* but also from *nirvāṇa*, either during the present life or in the *bardo* state that immediately follows physical death. Although the *Nyingma* and *Bönpo* teachings of *Dzogchen* are the same, they each have separate lineages of masters, which they trace back to at least the eighth century CE. *Dzogchen* is also an additional practice in some *Kagyū* sub-schools.

Fundamental to the practice of *Dzogchen* is the notion of *rig pa*, which is translated and explained as the ‘intrinsic awareness of the nature of mind’. *Rig pa* is the primordial, inherent *buddha*-nature of all sentient beings that has always existed independent of everything and yet permeates everything.

It is the state of mind of all the *buddhas*. It transcends all boundaries of time, existence, and nonexistence. *Rig pa* cannot be comprehended by the intellect; its energy is intuitive knowledge of the Truth. Nothing could have come into existence or could continue to exist without *rig pa*. *Rig pa* brought the universe and everything that exists into being; without it there would be no consciousness and no awareness. *Rig pa* is the foundation from which *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* have come into being, and illuminates both.

Two aspects of human nature need to be overcome before *rig pa* can be consciously realized – emotional veils (*nyon sgrib*) and perceptual or cognitive veils (*shes sgrib*). The former includes the entire range of human passions and feelings, while the latter includes all apparent knowledge and perception of limited and relative things in the realm of duality. Both kinds of veil are transient and constantly changing, yet for most human beings they continuously occupy the mind to the extent that awareness of one's primordial, inherent *buddha*-nature is entirely obscured.

According to *Dzogchen*, removal of these veils requires two things: the development of *bodhichitta* (T. *byang sems*), which is a mind wholeheartedly intent on enlightenment, and the non-conceptual awareness of the non-dual *shūnyatā* (emptiness, voidness), which is the essential Reality behind all phenomena – material or mental. The emotional and cognitive veils create transient stains or taints on the mind, which obscure awareness of one's *buddha*-nature. Mental activity is hence understood as taking place on two levels: that which is limited by transient stains (T. *sems*), and that which is devoid of all transient stains (T. *rig pa*). *Sems* is the natural state overlaid by veils, while *rig pa* is the natural state of pure unmodified awareness itself.

Rig pa is hence understood as pure gnosis, as the inherent and natural ground of all consciousness and cognition. Without *rig pa*, however veiled, there is no consciousness. *Dzogchen* is the system and practice by which all transient stains are eliminated, and one's own natural buddhahood is realized. Put another way, the mind (*sems*) – or mental process that is continuously fabricating, conceptualizing, differentiating, judging and forever creating illusions of reality – is different from the inherent and fundamental nature of the mind (*sems nyid*) itself:

Things are perceived in various different ways
 and may be elucidated in various different ways.
 Because you grasped at these various (appearances that arise),
 becoming attached to them, errors have come into existence.
 Yet with respect to all of these appearances
 of which you are aware in your mind,
 even though these appearances that you perceive do arise,
 if you do not grasp at them, then that is buddhahood.

Appearances are not erroneous in themselves,
 but because of your grasping at them, errors come into existence.
 But if you know that these thoughts only grasp at things which are mind,
 then they will be liberated by themselves.

Everything that appears is but a manifestation of mind.
 Even though the entire external inanimate universe appears to you,
 it is but a manifestation of mind.
 Even though all of the sentient beings of the six realms, ...
 Even though the happiness of humans
 and the delights of the *devas* in heaven, ...
 Even though the five poisons representing ignorance and the passions, ...
 Even though intrinsic awareness
 which is self-originated primal awareness, ...
 Even though good thoughts along the way to *nirvāṇa*, ...
 Even though obstacles due to demons and evil spirits, ...
 Even though the gods and other excellent attainments, ...
 Even though various kinds of purity, ...
 Even though remaining in one-pointed concentration
 without any discursive thoughts appears to you –
 It is all but a manifestation of mind.

Self-Liberation through Seeing with Naked Awareness 25–26; cf. SSNA p.25

Dzogchen meditation practices have changed with time. According to early *Dzogchen* teachings, all practice entails effort, which results in delusion. Meditation therefore consisted of simply recognizing the pure, luminous (*'od gsal*) and empty (*stong pa*) condition of one own innate awareness. Later texts, however, influenced by Indian tantric practices and teachings, introduced more specific meditational practices. These included meditation on light and darkness, as well as the more clearly tantric practices concerning the control of the body's subtle life energies (*prāṇa*). Consequently, whatever is said of *Dzogchen* may not be true of all *Dzogchen* texts or teachers.

Dzogchen texts and teachings are generally subdivided into three categories according to their emphasis: the mind category (*sems sde*), the spatial category (*klong sde*), and the esoteric instruction category (*man ngag gi sde*, *S. upadesha*). These three categories reflect the historical development of *Dzogchen*. The mind category relates to the early *Dzogchen* teachings which sought direct awareness with a minimum of meditational method or technique. Here, the emphasis is on the nature of mind itself (*sems nyid*), both in its pristine essence and its creation of illusory appearance. In the spatial category, the emphasis is on the primordial emptiness (*stong pa nyid*, *S. shūnyatā*) of the natural state of mind and of all phenomena, material or mental. The esoteric instruction category refers to the later development,

influenced to some extent by tantric practices, where the emphasis is on the ‘natural state (*gnas lugs*)’, which is the nature of mind itself. *Bönpo* teachings are largely concerned with the esoteric instruction category.

Fundamental to the practice of *Dzogchen* is direct mind-to-mind transmission of the wisdom-mind (*rig pa*) of the *buddhas* from a realized master to a receptive disciple. Without this nothing else can happen. This mind-to-mind transmission is known as ‘direct introduction’ into *Dzogchen*, which is generally accompanied by initiation (*abhisheka*). This does not mean that a disciple is immediately given the full experience of *rig pa*, but sufficient is transmitted to provide the aspirant with the *Dzogchen* ‘view (T. *ita ba*)’ of reality.

The practice of *Dzogchen* has three aspects: view (T. *ita ba*), meditation (T. *sgom pa*), and action or conduct (T. *spyod pa*). The *Dzogchen* view is the ability to see things for what they really are without any stain, taint, bias, prejudice, or influence of duality – to know that the nature of everything is of the same nature as one’s own innermost mind (*rig pa*) or *buddha*-nature. Meditation is the practice that converts that view into a continuous and steady experience. Action or conduct is incorporating that view into one’s outer life.

Preparation is required before receiving the introduction and mind-to-mind transmission from a master. This may include: the practice of tantric rituals and other forms of meditation; the study of *Dzogchen* literature and listening to expositions of the teachings; and various practices such as prostrations, recitation of *mantras*, *maṇḍala* offerings, *guru yoga*, deity (*yi dam*) worship, and meditation on the nature of *saṃsāra*. In daily life, the state of *rig pa* involves ‘letting go’ by realizing that one is controlled by external circumstances and that trying to control them is suffering – one can adapt to circumstances but not control them. After having received the introduction to *rig pa*, esoteric instructions (*upadesha*) may be given to the disciple to help him continue in a state of contemplation in which he becomes free from all discursive and conceptualizing thought. To a practitioner who has realized the *rig pa* state, when such thoughts do arise, they automatically pass away, leaving no stain in their wake.

Garab Dorje, the spiritual master traditionally credited as the first teacher of *Dzogchen*, is said to have summarized the teachings in his ‘three statements that strike the essential points (*tshig gsum gnad du brdeg pa*)’:

1. Direct ‘introduction’ to one’s own *buddha*-nature.
2. Remaining definitively (without uncertainty) in this natural state.
3. Continuing with confidence in this non-dual state of liberation.

That is to say: discovering one’s own true nature, consciously deciding to remain in that state, and then continuing in that state. Clarifying the above statements Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987) observes:

1. As for the direct introduction to one's own nature – this fresh immediate awareness of the present moment, transcending all thoughts related to the three times, is itself that primordial awareness or knowledge (*ye shes*) that is self-originated intrinsic awareness (*rig pa*). This is the direct introduction to one's own nature.
2. As for deciding definitively upon this unique state – whatever phenomena of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* may manifest, all of them represent the play of the creative energy or potentiality of one's own immediate intrinsic awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal*). Since there is nothing that goes beyond just this, one should continue in the state of this singular and unique awareness. Therefore, one must definitively decide upon this unique state for oneself and know that there exists nothing other than this.
3. As for directly continuing with confidence in liberation – whatever gross or subtle thoughts may arise, by merely recognizing their nature, they arise and (self-)liberate simultaneously in the vast expanse of the *dharmakāya* (body of the *Dharma*, Reality), where emptiness and awareness (are inseparable). Therefore, one should continue directly with confidence in their liberation.

Dudjom Rinpoche, in Golden Letters, GLTS pp.20–21

Dzogchen understands Buddhism to be comprised of three overall paths or approaches (*yānas*, vehicles) – *Sūtrayāna*, *Tantrayāna*, and *Dzogchen*. *Sūtrayāna* is the way of renunciation, the way of the monk in both *Theravāda* and *Mahāyāna* traditions. It includes study and understanding of the *sūtras*, meditation, and monastic discipline. *Tantrayāna* includes all forms of tantric practice that are aimed at purification and transformation. *Dzogchen* is regarded as the culmination of *Sūtrayāna* and *Tantrayāna*. It does not specifically concern itself with renunciation or transformation; rather, it is a path of self-liberation. Once a *Dzogchen* practitioner has received the mind-to-mind introduction from his master, he uses meditation to liberate himself from all clinging to thoughts and concepts concerning inner and outer phenomena. If thoughts arise, he allows them to arise, to self-liberate and to die out with no intervention on his part. He does not meditate on any particular deity, nor does he attempt to transform himself or his perception of reality into a *maṇḍala* deity. He does not need to purify himself because he is already innately pure and is becoming increasingly aware of the inherent purity and luminosity of his mind, which is his primordial *buddha*-nature.

He becomes like a clean mirror that faithfully reflects the many kinds of activity and phenomena in the world of *saṃsāra* without any misconceptions or illusions, remaining unaffected by them when they pass. The mirror of

his inner being remains the same – clear, stainless, and pure. Or – it is said – his pure mind is like the sun that shines continuously upon the earth and the sentient beings who dwell here. It is always brilliant, unaffected by the clouds that occasionally obstruct its rays: when the clouds are gone the sun is still shining, its brilliancy intact. As such, *Dzogchen* may sound simple, yet it is subtle and to be truly understood it must be experienced. It is said that *Dzogchen* teachings are primordial, having existed since the beginning of the cosmos, since which time they have been transmitted, mind to mind, from master to disciple through an unbroken lineage.

Dzogchen, then, following the introduction through mind-to-mind transmission, is cognition or perception with pure, naked awareness. It is a pure and unsullied mind, existing in its own fundamental nature or natural state, in the absence of all conceptualizing and differentiation. *Dzogchen* meditation practice itself attempts to move straight to this lucid state of mental being.

Although *Dzogchen* can be practised at any moment of the day or night, whether sitting, lying, standing or walking, there are some recommended postures for the periods of ‘formal’ meditation. Foremost among these is the seven-point *Vairochana* posture (S. *saptadharma-Vairochana*, T. *rnam snang chos bdun*), the seven points being variously listed. Khenpo Ngakchung Pelsang (1879–1941), explains:

The essential point for the body is to sit in the seven-point posture of *Vairochana*: legs crossed in the *vajra* posture; hands in the gesture of equanimity; the spine straight like a stack of coins; shoulders stretched apart and relaxed; the neck slightly bent; tongue touching the palate; and the eyes gazing in the direction of the tip of the nose.

Khenpo Ngakchung, A Guide to the Words of My Perfect Teacher, GWPT p.42

When seated in the full lotus posture, with the feet upon the thighs, the posture differs slightly from the yogic *padmāsana*. In *padmāsana*, the left leg is crossed over the right leg, which is the reverse of *vajraparyanka* (*vajra* posture), the traditional cross-legged pose of the Buddha, in which the right leg is crossed over the left.

Dzogchen texts speak of the three immovables – immovable body, immovable senses with the eyes open, and immovable mind. Having adopted the posture, no *mantra* is repeated, no *maṇḍala* is used as a focus for concentration, and no visualization is attempted. The eyes remain open and the mind is held in a state of concentration without focus on anything external or internal. The unfocused gaze may be along the nose or – as in many Tibetan Buddhist statues – looking at the ground. But the mind is not engaged in finding a physical focus. The meditation is both a dissolving and a uniting experience of consciousness. All thinking and conceptualizing dissolves, and the underlying unity of mind and consciousness is experienced. This

is understood to be the true nature of Reality. It is both the foundation, the path, and the fruit of the practice. But since fruit and foundation co-exist, there is, in fact, no path – only realization of the true nature of the Reality that underlies everything.

From the practical perspective of an ordinary meditator, this penetration through to the true nature of Reality does not take place all at once. But what does happen is that first the meditator becomes aware that all experience is a matter of conceptualizing, and that it is this that creates experience. He is then able to distinguish between the experience itself and consciousness of the experience. Following this realization, he no longer focuses on the experience but only on being conscious.

During such meditation, inner light and sound may be experienced. However, the practitioner neither listens to the sound nor looks at the light – for who is listening and who is looking? If there is sound and a listener, or light and a looker, there is duality rather than unity. The practitioner simply perceives without conceptualizing or analysing the experience. He does not think, “This is sound,” or “This is light.”

While the authenticity of the *Dzogchen* teaching is not in question, its history is a matter of debate among the various schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Legends and accounts concerning Garab Dorje are not in agreement and are generally hagiographical in nature. Some say he was born in the second century BCE, others that his birth was in 55 BCE, and yet others in 550 CE. Other accounts claim that the *Bön* teacher Shenrab Miwoche was the first to teach *Dzogchen*, around 1600 BCE, to which he gave the name ‘The *Bön* of the Perfect Mind’.

According to some accounts, Garab Dorje was born in Uḍḍiyāṇa, a country believed to have existed northwest of India, possibly in modern-day Pakistan or Afghanistan. He is said to have received the *Dzogchen* transmission from the celestial and primordial *Ādi-Buddha* Samantabhadra (T. Kun tu bzang po) in his aspect as Vajrasattva, which is Samantabhadra’s *sambhoga-kāya* (body of bliss or clear light). Garab Dorje then transmitted the *Dzogchen* teachings, known as *The Three Essential Statements* or *Three Vajra Verses* to Mañjushrīmitra who transmitted them to Shrīsīṃha. Thence they were passed to Jñānasūtra who transmitted them to Padmasambhava, who transmitted them to Vimalamitra, and thence to the great translator Vairochana, who brought them from Uḍḍiyāṇa to Tibet during the eighth century CE. Later, Longchen Rabjampa (1308–1363), commonly known as Longchenpa, unified the teachings in his seven-volume work, *The Seven Treasuries*. Rediscovered in the eighteenth century as a *terma* (hidden treasure), Jigme Ling Pa (1730–1798) compiled a condensed version of *The Seven Treasuries* in his *Longchen Nyingthig*, a text regarded as an authoritative source of *Dzogchen* teachings. It is said that Longchen Rabjampa appeared to Jigme Ling Pa several times in clear vision, inspiring him to record the *Dzogchen* teachings.¹

In *The Precious Treasury of the Way of Abiding*, which is one of *The Seven Treasuries*, Longchen Rabjampa quotes an extract from a text credited to Garab Dorje, *Deep Immersion in Awareness*, in which Dorje attempts to convey something of the indescribable state of intrinsic awareness of the nature of mind (*rig pa*):

Given evenness,
 in which objects are not conceptualized
 and mind is not considered real,
 body and mind dwell quite naturally
 in the expanse of that evenness.
 Regardless of how awareness appears to arise,
 quite naturally, there is no wavering
 from this expanse of evenness.

Objects with characteristics have no existence as objects,
 for one abides in a state of deep immersion.
 Being beyond time, there is no duality,
 and so no distinctions can be made.
 No distinctions can be made
 between ordinary beings and *buddhas*,
 between *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.

What has substance and what lacks substance
 are equal in basic space.
Buddhas and ordinary beings are equal in basic space.
 Relative and ultimate reality are equal in basic space.
 Flaws and qualities are equal in basic space.
 Up, down, all directions are equal in basic space.
 Therefore, when arising, things arise equally,
 without being better or worse.
 When abiding, they abide equally,
 without being better or worse.
 When freed, they are freed equally,
 without being better or worse. . . .

They arise, abide, and are freed,
 and when they arise, their arising and their freedom
 are simultaneous and uninterrupted.
 Since there is no interruption, causality does not intervene.
 Since there is no causality, the abyss of *saṃsāra* is crossed.
 Since this abyss has no foundation,
 how can there be any chance of falling?

The expanse of Samantabhadra is timelessly unchanging:
 the realm of Vajrasattva is without transition or change.
 It all comes down to understanding ‘buddhahood’
 to refer to nothing more than one’s own true face beholding itself.

Garab Dorje, Deep Immersion in Awareness; cf. in PTWA pp.89–90

See also: **khregs gcod**, **navayāna**, **thod rgal**.

1. See David Boaz, *Dzogchen and the Nine Vehicles of Enlightenment*, DNVE pp.3–4.

eremitism The life of an eremite or hermit. See **hermit** (7.1), **solitary** (7.1), **solitary life**.

fǎnzhào (C) *Lit.* to revert (*fǎn*) the radiance (*zhào*); to reverse the light, to turn within, to look within; a Daoist idiom for turning one’s attention (one’s light) from the outer physical world towards the inner spiritual world – during daily existence and particularly during spiritual practice; to illumine within, inner contemplation; often used in conjunction or synonymously with *huíguāng* (to reverse the light, to turn within). See **huíguāng**, **zhào** (8.2).

five names, five holy names See **names**, **pāñch nām**.

five names See **names**.

fǔ, tǔfǔ (C) *Lit.* earth (*tǔ*) pot (*fǔ*); an earthen cauldron; the crucible or reaction vessel of outer alchemy (*wàidān*); the main tool of alchemists and the operational focus of alchemical processes.

Designating several types of vessel, a *fǔ* is typically formed of two symmetrical halves, one fitting on top of the other. After adding the ingredients, the *fǔ* is sealed and placed either over a fire or in a stove or furnace (*lú*). The term was adopted into *nèidān* (inner alchemy), but replaced in common *nèidān* usage by the near-synonymous *dǐng* (tripod, cauldron). In *nèidān*, *dǐng* and *lú* together signify the esoteric centre of a human being where an inner spiritual alchemy is practised.

In his *Dispelling Doubts on Symbolic Language*, master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains the earlier use of *fǔ*. According to *nèidān* philosophy, it is necessary to unite *yīn* and *yáng*, the two aspects of duality, in order to develop the spiritual awareness that is one’s innate nature (the spiritual embryo, *shèngtāi*):

The nature of earth (*tǔ*) is warm and soft, such that it nurtures things. A pot (*fǔ*) is mainly used for boiling and simmering, such that it completes things. By adding the word ‘earth (*tǔ*)’ to ‘pot (*fǔ*)’, it becomes a vessel that nurtures and completes. It is not the same as ordinary earth (*tǔ*) or an ordinary pot (*fǔ*). Returning medicine to the earthen pot (*tǔfǔ*) represents the exercise of uniting *yīn* and *yáng*, integrating them in order to nurture the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*).

The spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) is nurtured essentially by focusing the attention single-mindedly without scattering (*i.e.* by meditation), by remaining truthful and observant right at the centre, by balancing *yīn* and *yáng*, and by remaining upright without leaning or tilting. This is why it is called an earthen pot (*tǔfǔ*). The core of this symbolism is only one word: ‘centre’. Be present at this centre, then *yīn* and *yáng* will unite, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) will collect together, and the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) will be whole. Lose this centre, and *yīn* and *yáng* will separate, the five elements (*wǔxíng*) will diverge from each other, and the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) will be harmed. So being present at the centre is the profound secret of nurturing the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*).

Those who are ignorant of this dig the earth to make an oven in the ground (*dìlú*), then they heat cinnabar to extract mercury from it. They take the oven in the ground (*dìlú*) to be an earthen pot (*tǔfǔ*). Others use a clay stove (*nílú*) as an ash mixer to separate silver by burning the lead in it. They take the ash mixer to be an earthen pot (*tǔfǔ*). These are all mistaken.

Zǐyě¹ said: “True earth has no location. True intent has no form.” The word ‘*tǔfǔ* (earthen pot)’ is used to symbolize the centre. The centre – having no form, image, direction, or location – is where the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) is whole. How can it mean a clay pot (*nítǔ zhī fǔ*)?

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

Later in the same text, master Liú Yīmíng summarizes his explanation of the term in one of his *Poems to Resolve Doubts*:

The earthen pot (*tǔfǔ*) is not made of earth –
upright balance in the centre is its true name.
Wood, metal, water and fire are all gathered inside,
cultivating a mystic pearl (*xuánzhū*) that pervades the night.

Liú Yīmíng, *Xiàngyán pòyí*, ZW247, DS14

Wood, metal, water and fire are four of the five elements (*wǔxíng*) that in Liú Yīmíng’s image are united by the fifth element of earth, which represents the positive and healthful centre of being within each of the other four elements.

The ‘elements’ of Chinese philosophy represent aspects of the continually changing face of things, as in the ebb and flow of the seasons.

See also: **dǐng**, **dǐnglú**.

1. Probably Lù Zǐyě (c.C13th), a Daoist master and commentator on the *Wùzhēn piān*.

fúqì (C) *Lit.* to take (*fú*) energy (*qì*) (as a medicine); ingestion, consumption, or absorption of *qì*; a major Daoist meditation technique that has existed since at least the *Hàn* dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE) and became most popular during the *Suǐ* (581–618) and *Táng* (618–907) dynasties; includes a variety of meditative breathing exercises aimed at nourishing the body and enhancing one’s inner *qì* through circulation of *qì* and guiding it to certain parts of the body; synonymous with *shíqì* (to eat *qì*), and closely associated with *pìgǔ* (full or partial fasting). Literally, *qì* means ‘breath’, but it is more commonly understood as ‘energy’. Nevertheless, the two meanings come together in the breathing exercises employed to enhance, circulate, or ‘ingest’ *qì*.

Breathing exercises are a key aspect of Daoist spiritual cultivation, whereby the practitioner ‘ingests’ *qì* in the form of the pure energy (*qì*) of the surrounding space and which is perceived as the cosmic emanation of the *Dào*. According to ancient Chinese thought, the cosmos and the human body are part of a single continuum. In Daoist thought, the goal of transcendence is defined as merging with the *Dào*, which entails complete psychophysical transformation. Hence, inhalation or ingestion of *qì* is believed to harmonize the microcosm (the body) with the macrocosm, leading to the cherished goal of transcending the physical.

There are various methods of ingesting *qì*, of which two are the most prevalent. While both involve absorbing the energy of *qì*, the first focuses on the ingestion of *qì* as air (breath); the second focuses on the absorption of *qì* as pure energy. The two methods are known as:

1. *Wǔqì*. *Lit.* five (*wǔ*) *qì*; most commonly seen as *wǔyá* (five shoots). Perceived as the purest *qì*, these are the essences of each of the five directions of space, and thus the primordial essences of the cosmos. One of the most popular and important Daoist meditative techniques in medieval China, this breathing technique was accompanied by the ingestion of saliva and visualization of its circulation through the body. Several variants of the method were practised during this period.
2. *Huángqì*. *Lit.* yellow (*huáng*) *qì*; full name: *huángqì yángjīng* (yellow *qì* and *yáng* essence). The yellow *qì* is the energy of the moon, the *yáng*

essence is the energy of the sun. One form of this technique was practised from the late fourth century CE by the *Shàngqīng* school, which added a second part – absorption of the *qì* of the *běidǒu qīxīng*, which is the Big Dipper, the seven brightest stars of the constellation *Ursa Major* (the Plough).

Ingestion of outer *qì* may be practised in association with the ingestion of talismanic water (*fúshuǐ*, i.e. water containing the ashes of burned talismans). The various breathing exercises used for circulating the energy (*xíngqì*) or retaining the energy (*bìqì*) are very often accompanied by *dǎoyǎn* (a form of callisthenics).

Various texts suggest that the timing of such practices is significant. The hours between midnight and midday are regarded as the most beneficial, this being the time of ‘living energy (*shēngqì*)’; the hours between midday and midnight are to be avoided, this being regarded as the time of ‘dead energy (*sǐqì*)’.

See also: **meditation (Daoism)**, **pìgǔ** (►4).

gcod (T) *Lit.* cutting off, severance; cutting off attachment to the body, the self, and the dualistic mind; phonetically rendered as *chöd*; a Tibetan Buddhist practice containing elements of both *Mahāyāna* and *Tantrayāna*; still practised by some Tibetan Buddhists of all schools, though mostly associated in present times with the *Kagyü* tradition; believed to have been drawn from the teachings of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*; introduced into Tibet by the Indian yogi Phadampa Sangye (d. 1117) who passed it on to his most notable female disciple, the *yoginī* Machig Labdrön, founder of the *Mahāmudrā-gcod*; one of eight significant Tibetan tantric transmission lineages. Like all meditation practices, *gcod* should be performed under the guidance of a suitably qualified *guru* or *lama*. The word *gcod* is also used to describe the *Dzogchen* practice of *khregs gcod* (breaking through resistance).

Traditionally performed at night in isolated places, especially charnel grounds or cemeteries, the practitioner visualizes his body as a sacrificial food offering to a vast assembly of benevolent deities, malevolent demons, *ḍākinīs*, *dharmapālas* (*dharma* protectors), *lamas* (in their spiritual form), and various lesser deities and spirits. Specifically, he imagines that his body is being dismembered, with the goddess *Vajrayoginī* removing his head and using it as a large pot in which to hold his various body parts, organs, and tissues. The intention is to eliminate attachment to the body and self, and to develop compassion for others. The practitioner begins by visualizing the demons as real and genuinely existent, later accepting that they are only mental fabrications. It is believed that merit is accumulated by the generous act of offering one’s body to the demons. It is also used as a healing or protection

ritual; and though generally practised in secluded and frightening places, it is sometimes performed by a congregation of monks. The English Buddhist Tenzin Palmo comments:

At a purely external level *gcod* is blood-curdling stuff. In essence, it involves the practitioner taking him or herself off to a charnel ground or cemetery in the dead of night and there, surrounded by decomposing corpses and the stench of death, visualizing the systematic dismemberment of his or her own body right down to the eyes, brain, and entrails. When it is done, all the pieces are visualized being put into a pot, boiled up and offered to all beings to satisfy their every craving. While the Tibetans may have been a wild, unruly bunch with a love of swashbuckling stories, *gcod* contains meaning of profound significance. By these seemingly gruesome visualizations, what the meditator is doing is giving up the object of greatest attachment – the body. Chopping it up and putting it into a sacred cauldron to transform into nectar before offering it to all sentient beings thus becomes the ultimate exercise in relinquishing the ego – the supreme act of selflessness.

Tenzin Palmo, Cave in the Snow, CSTP pp.130–31

The meditation may be practised while seated, or can be integrated into a dance in which the practitioner accompanies himself on a thighbone trumpet and a two-headed drum (*ḍamarū*). The thighbone is held in the left hand, signifying the female hand of wisdom, and the *ḍamarū* is held in the right hand, signifying the male hand of compassion in action. A tantric *ḍamarū* has the shape of an hourglass, the two hemispheres being traditionally made of wood or human crania, with two strikers tied on strings around the drum's 'waist'. The *ḍamarū* varies in size from four to sixteen inches in diameter, the larger size being recommended for use with *gcod*.

The purpose of *gcod* is to alter radically the practitioner's mental and spiritual outlook or "view". The modern monk Yangthang Rinpoche considers the external and internal aspects of *gcod*. Firstly, the external:

The external practice of *gcod* is to go to a qualified *lama* and receive the complete instructions on how to do every aspect of the practice. Then one abandons all worldly concerns.... One goes off to frightening and dangerous places such as burial or charnel grounds and to terrifying places where most people would not go. In Tibet, there were a hundred such places on the route the *gcod* practitioners would travel. They would spend some time in each one and then move to the next. At each place there were lots of spirits. These places are exactly the type of places where external *gcod* should be practised because,

when one goes to these types of places, one calls out to the gods and spirits and asks them to create magical displays and deceptions, so that the practitioner can apply the view (spiritual perspective) of *gcod*.

If you are a practitioner of a high view, there will be many gods and spirits who will surround you, and you will have an opportunity to perform the various *gcod* visualizations and test how strong your view really is while you are having the frightening experiences of all these spirits and demons. This practice is maintained while going from place to place and if everything is going well, the demons and spirits will follow you all day and night, and you will have an opportunity to constantly apply the view. In order to get past any overwhelming fear, one shouts “*phat!*” very loudly and other sounds to bring oneself back to the view of realizing that the frightening display arises only from the mind, *i.e.* that the gods and spirits, which seem very real, are only the display of one’s mind and nothing else. Under these most trying circumstances, one can test one’s realization that external appearances arise only from the mind; the normal reaction is suppressed by considering the splendour of the view. This is what the *gcod* practitioner must accomplish, so that gradually, as the view deepens, the gods or spirits cannot be harmful. This is the external practice of *gcod*.

Changthang Rinpoche, “Chod – Cutting through the Ego”; cf. CCEY

He then considers the internal or meditative aspects of *gcod*:

The internal practice is simply to relax in a natural state and to remain in the view while all mental phenomena, such as displays and visions, are occurring. A *gcod* practitioner would probably spend his entire life in cemeteries and uncertain places. He (she) would not return to the household and live comfortably, but for the most part, would spend his life in retreat. Westerners probably will not have an opportunity to do this. Therefore, as *gcod* practitioners who are also householders, we must try to reduce, little by little, our attachment to our household and the world. We can try to eliminate attachment to our situation while remaining in our situation, without leaving it. . . .

In the inner *gcod* practice, one transforms the body into anything that is excellent or edible and invites the guests to partake of the feast in any way they wish. If you are uncertain about this and you are not really imagining that they are devouring the feast, then you are just playing a game with the gods and spirits whom you have invited. In order to practise, you must have great compassion for all beings, our previous mothers, and just let them take what they want in any way that they want. At first, it won’t be like this; we won’t be able to actually give up the body so easily, but by meditating again and again, slowly

we will be able, in the actual presence of gods and spirits, to give up our body easily and certainly. When this happens, the mind is purified of obscurity and merit is accumulated; one has understood the meaning of inner *gcod*, which is the giving up, through generosity, of our attachment to the five aggregates. Absolute *gcod*, or the real meaning of *gcod*, is to understand clearly that all confused perceptions arise from grasping to self. Until we have been able to sever the root of confusion, confusion will persist.

Yangthang Rinpoche, "Chod – Cutting through the Ego"; cf. CCEY

gomi zen (J) *Lit.* five-flavour (*go-mi*) *Zen*; five-taste *Zen*; five kinds of meditation (*zen*); a somewhat pejorative classification by the Chinese monk Guīfēng Zōngmì (780–840); often mentioned along with *ichimi zen* (one-taste *zen*) – an expression used by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), the founder of the *Sōtō* school of *Zen*, for what he understood to be the authentic meditation taught by the Buddha and the patriarchs.

According to Zōngmì, the five types are:

1. *Bompu zen*. Ordinary person (*bompu*) meditation; meditation practised by an unenlightened person.
2. *Gedō zen*. Outside-way (*ge-dō*) meditation; heretical meditation; meditation practised by non-Buddhists; also, meditation practised for any purpose other than enlightenment, such as relaxation, well-being, rebirth in the celestial realms, gaining supernatural powers, *etc.*
3. *Shōjō zen*. Lesser-vehicle (*shō-jō*) meditation; meditation practised by *Hinayāna* ('Lesser Vehicle') or *Theravāda* Buddhism, where the goal is to attain enlightenment for oneself alone.
4. *Daijō zen*. Great-vehicle (*dai-jō*) meditation; meditation practised by *Mahāyāna* ('Great Vehicle') Buddhism – from which *Zen* Buddhism originated; meditation with the intention of enlightenment and realization of one's innate *buddha*-nature, but with the aim of helping other beings towards enlightenment, according to the *bodhisattva* vow of remaining in *samsāra* (transmigration) until all sentient beings have attained liberation.
5. *Saijōjō zen*. Supremely excellent (*saijō*) vehicle (*jō*) meditation; meditation practised by followers of the highest teachings (*i.e.* *Zen* Buddhist meditation); the entirely non-dual *zen* that is said to have been practised by all *buddhas* and patriarchs; *zen* in which the path and the goal become one, and one's innate *buddha*-nature is fully realized, while still maintaining the

bodhisattva ideal. Understood by Dōgen to be the same as the *shikantaza* (nothing but just sitting) form of *zazen* (sitting meditation).

See also: **ichimi zen**.

good acts, good actions, good deeds, good exercises, good practices, good works
(Gk. *agathai praxeis*, *kalai praxeis*; L. *bona opera*) See **agathai praxeis**.

gtong len (T) *Lit.* giving (*btang*) and receiving (*len*); giving and taking, sending and receiving; phonetically rendered as *tonglen*; Tibetan Buddhist mind training (*blo sbyong*), meditational practice in which one broadcasts one's positive energy, happiness and good fortune to others and receives their misfortune, negativity, miseries, and suffering.

Gtong len is the seventh of eight mind-training exercises described in the *Blo sbyong tshig brgyad ma* ('Eight Verses on Mind Training'), which are intended to cultivate the attitude of mind of a *bodhisattva* that is inclined towards spiritual matters and enlightenment (S. *bodhichitta*). The first six exercises involve altering one's perception of and approach to others. They are: viewing all sentient beings as valuable treasures to be understood with compassion; cultivating the attitude of a lowly person whose life is one of service to others; addressing and neutralizing *kleshas* (afflictions, impurities) as soon as they arise in one's mind, especially those of self-interest and hatred; treating cruel people as precious opportunities to practise tolerance and compassion; permitting others to win, happily accepting defeat for oneself; and treating the ungrateful as one's special teachers. *Gtong len* is the seventh exercise, and the eighth is to develop the wisdom that arises from true selflessness and the awareness of a mind that is free of all concepts.

The intention of *gtong len* is to open oneself to the suffering of others and to develop compassion, sympathy, empathy, generosity, good will, lovingkindness, and genuine love for others. In the process, one is rid of the many human imperfections that hinder spiritual progress, such as ill will and greed. In general, one's perspective shifts from egotism, obsession with oneself and attachment to possessions, to a genuine sense of care and compassion for others.

The practice begins by considering the emptiness of all mundane things. This includes one's body, possessions and what one considers to be one's self. This exercise is sometimes performed by visualizing oneself as Avalokiteshvara, the *bodhisattva* of compassion. Attention is then focused on the breath. With every out-breath one imagines one's love, compassion, happiness and merit (*punya*) going out to all sentient beings; and with every in-breath one imagines the misfortune and sufferings of others rising from

them as smoke, darkness and various fearsome creatures, and entering one's own body. There are many permissible variations in the practice, however, especially regarding the range of possible imaginings and visualizations. These have been systematized by a number of teachers into a sequence of exercises following this broad outline.¹

Sogyal Rinpoche summarizes the benefits:

Of all the practices I know, the practice of *gtong len* . . . is one of the most useful and powerful. When you feel yourself locked in upon yourself, *gtong len* opens you to the truth of the suffering of others; when your heart is blocked, it destroys those forces that are obstructing it; and when you feel estranged from the person who is in pain before you, or bitter or despairing, it helps you to find within yourself and then to reveal the loving, expansive radiance of your own true nature. No other practice I know is as effective in destroying the self-grasping, self-cherishing, and self-absorption of the ego, which is the root of all our suffering and the root of all hard-heartedness.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.197

See also: **blo sbyong**.

1. See e.g. Karma Chagmey Rinpoche, *Union of Mahamudra and Dzogchen*, UMDC pp.184–90; Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, TLDS pp.197–212; Francisco J. Varela and Natalie Depraz, “Imagining,” in *BSGW* pp.220–23; Sangye Khadro, *Preparing for Death and Helping the Dying*, PDHD p.39.

gtum mo (T), **chanḍālī** (S), **zhāntuóli** (C), **sendari** (J) *Lit.* fierce (*gtum*) woman (*mo*); a metaphor for the inner heat and bliss produced by controlling the body's subtle life energy (*prāṇa*, *vāyu*) by means of breath control and visualization at the navel centre (*maṇipūraka chakra*) of the subtle body, which is the centre associated with the fire (*tejas*) element (*tattva*); a practice originating in Indian tantrism that became a part of the six doctrines (*dharma*s) of Nāropa and subsequently a core part of the *Kagyū* school of Tibetan tantric Buddhism (*Vajrayāna*); also practised in the *Lamdre*, *Kālachakra*, *Hevajra* and *Anuyoga* schools of *Vajrayāna*, as well as in the *Bön* tradition; a part of the perfection or completion stage (*nishpanna-krama*) of *anuttara-yoga tantra*. The Tibetan *gtum mo* is also phonetically rendered as *tummo*. *Chanḍālī* (‘Outcaste’), also called *Chanḍālinī* and *Mātangī*, is the name of a tantric goddess who represents the ferocious aspect of *Devī*, the divine Mother.

The *gtum mo* practice consists of breath control and visualization of a seed *mantra* (*bīja-mantra*) in the navel *chakra* – the lowest of the four *chakras*

(crown, throat, heart, navel) in the Tibetan tantric system. When performed correctly by direction of the subtle life energy, inner or psychic ‘heat’ is generated, which is channelled into the central *nāḍī* (the *avadhūtī* or *sushumṇā*). The ‘heat’ is a part of the practitioner’s blissful experience of the flow of subtle life energy. This heat then rises up the *avadhūtī* through the heart and throat *chakras* to the crown of the head. Here, it begins to ‘melt’ the white *bindu* (‘drop’, centre) of subtle life energy situated there, which then descends through the *avadhūtī* and the *chakras* until it reaches the navel *chakra*.¹ As it passes through each *chakra*, the practitioner experiences an intensification of bliss, sometimes described as the blazing, melting heat of *tummo*,² or as the four successive delights (*dga’ ba bzhi*) in the four *chakras*.³ The blissful psychic heat generated by the practice is said to burn or eliminate all manner of concepts, obstacles, and confusions from the mind.

The practice of *gtum mo* has parallels to the raising of the *kuṇḍalinī* of Indian *yoga* and *tantra*. Since both involve awakening of the subtle energy of *prāṇa*, there are considerable similarities, although they differ in the details. In *kuṇḍalinī yoga*, for instance, the practitioner begins by raising the *prāṇa* from the rectal (*mūlādhāra*) *chakra*, while *gtum mo* begins in the navel *chakra*.

The generation of body heat by means of meditation is well known. The practice of *gtum mo* has become known in the West through Alexandra David-Néel’s *Magic and Mystery in Tibet* and translations of the biography of Milarepa.⁴ There are a number of documented cases in which *gtum mo* practitioners have survived for extended periods in extremely cold temperatures, even when seated outdoors. A Harvard research team, working with three experienced *gtum mo* practitioners, measured increases in peripheral skin temperature of up to 8.3°C.⁵ According to the traditional account, Milarepa’s disciples were so adept at the practice that they needed to wear only cotton clothes, even in winter. According to a verse attributed to Milarepa:

I took up the instructions eagerly,
and through earnest practice I meditated intensely.
Through the blessing of the meditation,
the *chaṇḍālī* blazed in my body.
Just a single cotton robe kept me warm.
The luminosity arose in my mind.

Milarepa, in Treasury of Oral Instructions, in BRTB p.62

According to another story, Tilopa, together with his disciple Nāropa, was meditating on the banks of a stream full of leeches. Tilopa said, “If I had a true disciple, he would make himself into a step so that I could cross to the other side.” Nāropa immediately bent over for his master to cross, but when Tilopa put his foot on Nāropa and jumped across the stream, Nāropa fell into the icy water and the leeches began to suck his blood. Thereupon, Tilopa gave Nāropa the instructions concerning the practice of *gtum mo*.⁶

1. Jamgön Kongtrül, *Treasury of Knowledge* 6:4, TK6 p.325; *Paths and Grounds of Guhyasamaja*, PGGN p.100.
2. Edward Henning, “The Six Vajra-Yogas of Kālacakra,” in ALSE p.256.
3. See *gTum mo 'bar 'dzag yig chung*, in NST2 p.78.
4. Alexandra David-Néel, *Magic and Mystery in Tibet*, MMTD p.230ff., *passim*; *Life of Milarepa*, LMTT pp.74, 87, 117, 129, 175, 195.
5. Herbert Benson *et al.*, “Body temperature changes during the practice of g Tum-mo yoga,” BTCT.
6. Cf. Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche, *Lifestory of Nāropa*, LSN2.

guān (C) *Lit.* to look at, to observe, to scrutinize; hence, an observation place, a lookout point; also, a monastery; in Daoism and Buddhism, contemplation, meditation; a form of Daoist meditation, often translated as ‘observation’, and adapted from Buddhist *vipassanā* (Pa. insight, S. *vipashyanā*) meditation.

The use of *guān* for ‘monastery’ probably stems from the name of the first known Daoist monastery, Lóuguān (‘Observation Tower’, ‘Lookout Tower’), built during the fifth century CE, which became part of a flourishing Daoist centre, remaining so to this day. According to one version of the legend, Yīn Xǐ, the guardian of the pass through the Zhōngnán mountain range, intercepted Lǎozǐ as the latter was leaving China, travelling westward. Recognizing Lǎozǐ, Yīn Xǐ invited him to stay at Lóuguān, and requested him to write down his teachings, which later became known as the *Dàodé jīng*.

Guān appears in several compound nouns. In Chinese Buddhism *zhǐguān* (tranquillity and insight) was used to translate the Sanskrit *śamatha-vipashyanā* (Pa. *samatha-vipassanā*). In Daoism, the most important compound noun is *nèiguān* (inner contemplation), referring to the combination of intentional awareness of various parts or aspects of the body and mind, together with visualization of certain inner deities and palaces.

The *Scripture on Purity and Stillness* (attributed to Gě Xuán, C3rd CE) lists three modes of contemplation and their respective benefits. These are: *nèiguān* (inner contemplation), *wàiguān* (outer contemplation), and *yuǎnguān* (distant contemplation). Through contemplation of the mind, then of the body, and lastly of external objects and other beings, practitioners learn to recognize that none of these truly exist; that they possess no independent self or identity – rather, upon closer scrutiny, they are to be understood as emanations of the pure *Dào*. The practice culminates in *kōngguān* (contemplation of emptiness):

Inwardly contemplate (*nèiguān*) your mind –
and see that there is no mind.
Externally contemplate (*wàiguān*) your body
and see that there is no body.

Contemplate distant phenomena (*yuǎnguān*) –
 and see that there are no phenomena.
 Once you have realized these three,
 you will discover (*jiàn*) emptiness (*kōng*)!

Qīngjìng jīng, DZ620 1b, JY262 2:5b, TEAK p.27

A seventh-century Buddhist-inspired encyclopaedia, the *Pivotal Meaning of the Daoist Teaching*,¹ a compendium of Daoist *nèidān* (inner alchemy) texts,² distinguishes three categories of *guān*, which each cover the same ground, but analyse it in a slightly different manner:³

1. *Qìguān* (contemplation of energy), which is a meditative focus on the more physical aspects of the body (e.g. breathing); and *shénguān* (contemplation of spirit), which is a meditative focus on the spirit.
2. *Jiǎfǎ guān* (contemplation of apparent *dharma*s or things), which is contemplation on the apparent or outer aspects of reality; *shífǎ guān* (contemplation of the reality of *dharma*s or things), which is contemplation on the changing nature of external reality; and *piānkōng guān* (contemplation of partial emptiness), initial contemplation on the essential emptiness of Reality. These three methods were intended to make practitioners aware of the different ways of looking at so-called reality.
3. *Yǒuguān* (contemplation of being); *wúguān* (contemplation of nonbeing); and *zhōngdào guān* (contemplation of the middle way). Adepts progress from a vision of reality (being) to one of nonexistence (nonbeing), and on to the acceptance of the ‘middle way’. These last three contemplative practices are regarded as an enlightened combination of the first two categories of contemplation, and are considered to be the highest form of contemplation.

The same text also describes the two kinds of inner contemplation formulated by the *Chóngxuán* (‘Twofold Mystery’) school of Daoism – the contemplation of energy (*qìguān*) and the contemplation of spirit (*shénguān*). The “twofold mystery” is based on an interpretation of a phrase (“mystery of mysteries”) in the *Dàodé jīng*.⁴ It implies liberation from both existence and nonexistence (or emptiness), and is a concept adopted into Daoism from the *Madhyamaka* school of *Mahāyāna* Buddhism:

The two kinds of contemplation (*guān*) are the deep realms of concentration (*dìng*) and wisdom (*huì*), the mysterious gateway to emptiness and being. They are used to harmonize the mind and swiftly achieve the perfection of the twofold mystery (*chóngxuán*). By means of these

contemplations, anxiety and worry are swept away, and one finally returns to the shores of the non-dual truth of the *Dào*. Pursuing them, one will certainly attain perfection; following them, one will certainly find liberation from all *dharma*s. This, then, is their perfection.

To explain: the two kinds of contemplation (*guān*) are contemplation of energy (*qìguān*) and contemplation of spirit (*shénguān*). The two terms ‘energy’ and ‘spirit’ refer to the inner constituents of body and mind.

The body belongs to the realm of existence; it is subject to the delusions of the world of form. Thus, the term ‘energy’ is used to refer to concentration.

The mind belongs to the realm of nonexistence; it is difficult to fathom. Thus, the term ‘spirit’ is used to refer to the insight of emptiness. . . .

To summarize, thus, what contemplation (*guān*) means: we can say that it is to meditate (*sī*) and examine. In other words, one meditates (*sī*) and visualizes (*cún*) the wondrous One on the one hand, and examines and inspects what lies beyond all phenomena on the other.

Dàojiào yishū, DZ1129 17:5.3b; cf. TEAK p.224

See also: **anupassanā**, **nèiguān**.

1. *Dàojiào yishū*, DZ1129 3:3b–6b.
2. See also Livia Kohn, *The Taoist Experience*, TEAK p.225ff.
3. See “guan,” *Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ET1 p.453.
4. *Dàodé jīng* 1.

guru yoga (S), **bla ma'i rnal 'byor** (T) A devotional practice or *sādhana* of Tibetan tantric Buddhism (*Vajrayāna*) in which a disciple meditates on his root *guru* or *lama* as the essence of all *buddhas*, with the intention of imbibing the wisdom, virtues and attributes of the *guru*, and so reach enlightenment.

The *guru* or *lama* is one of the three roots (*rtsa gsum*) of Tibetan tantrism – the *lama* or *guru*, the *yi dam* (meditation deity), and the *ḍākinī*. These are understood as the internal aspects of the three Buddhist jewels or refuges – the Buddha, the *Dharma* (teachings, path), and the *sangha* (Buddhist community). The *lama* bestows blessings and mind-to-mind transmission; the *yi dam* confers *siddhi* (realization, accomplishment), together with instruction and authority through visions; and the *ḍākinī* is the root or basis of all activity that arises from enlightenment, such as spreading the *Dharma* and bringing peace and comfort to sentient beings.

No headway can be made without the *guru* or *lama*. He initiates, blesses and instructs the disciple, imparting his own spiritual power and understanding.

He is understood to embody not only the Buddha, but also the *Dharma* and the *sangha*. In that sense, he is the primary root of both the inner and outer aspects of the three refuges. The speech of the *lama* – what he says – is the *Dharma*; his body – what he does and what he represents – is the *sangha*; and his mind – his consciousness – is the mind of the Buddha. The intention of *guru yoga* is for the disciple to dedicate speech, body and mind to the *lama* in order to become absorbed in the *lama* and thereby to attain *siddhi* (accomplishment), which is enlightenment. Sogyal Rinpoche (*b.* 1937) says:

All the *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and enlightened beings are present at all moments to help us, and it is through the presence of the master that all of their blessings are focused directly at us. Those who know Padmasambhava (credited with bringing tantric Buddhism to Tibet) know the living truth of the promise he made over a thousand years ago: “I am never far from those with faith, or even from those without it, though they do not see me. My children will always, always, be protected by my compassion.” All we need to do to receive direct help is to ask....

What most of us need, almost more than anything, is the courage and humility really to ask for help, from the depths of our hearts: to ask for the compassion of the enlightened beings, to ask for purification and healing, to ask for the power to understand the meaning of our suffering and transform it; at a relative level to ask for the growth in our lives of clarity, of peace, of discernment, and to ask for the realization of the absolute nature of mind that comes from merging with the deathless wisdom mind of the master.

There is no swifter, more moving, or more powerful practice for invoking the help of the enlightened beings, for arousing devotion and realizing the nature of mind, than the practice of *guru yoga*. Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910–1991) wrote, “The words *guru yoga* mean ‘union with the nature of the *guru*’, and in this practice we are given methods by which we can blend our own minds with the enlightened mind of the master.”¹ Remember that the master – the *guru* – embodies the crystallization of the blessings of all *buddhas*, masters, and enlightened beings. So to invoke him or her is to invoke them all; and to merge your mind and heart with your master’s wisdom mind is to merge your mind with the truth and very embodiment of enlightenment.

The outer teacher introduces you directly to the truth of your inner teacher. The more it is revealed through his or her teaching and inspiration, the more you begin to realize that the outer and inner teacher are indivisible. As you gradually discover the truth of this for yourself, by invoking it again and again in the practice of *guru yoga*, a deepening confidence, gratitude, joy and devotion are born in you,

through which your mind and the wisdom mind of the master do actually become indivisible.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.147–48

Dudjom Rinpoche (1904–1987) gives the same message:

It is vital to put all your energy into the *guru yoga*, holding onto it as the life and heart of the practice. If you do not, then your meditation will be very dull, and even if you do make a little progress, there will be no end to obstacles, and no possibility of true, genuine realization being born within the mind. So by fervently praying with uncontrived devotion, after a while the direct blessing of the wisdom mind of the master will be transmitted, empowering you with a unique realization, beyond words, born deep within your mind.

Dudjom Rinpoche, Advice for Mountain Retreat, in TLDS p.148

To achieve this end, various practices, both external and internal, are prescribed by different schools and lineages, and there are many texts devoted entirely to the subject. Each of the four main schools have their own manuals describing variations of *guru yoga*; but although the details of the practices may vary from school to school, the essence remains the same. Patrul Rinpoche (1808–1887) of the *Nyingma* tradition describes three stages: “visualizing the field of merit, offering the seven branches, and praying with resolute trust”.² The “field of merit (*tshogs zhing*)” refers to the focus of one’s devotional practices, external and internal, and usually implies the *yi dam*, the *guru*, and so on. Patrul Rinpoche adds that “There can be no doubt that the single most excellent, secret and unsurpassable field of merit is the *vajra* (tantric) master.”³

The purpose of Tibetan Buddhist visualization is a complete transformation of the practitioner’s perception of himself and the world – not only conceptually, but also experientially. Patrul Rinpoche provides instructions on how to commence this practice, according to the teachings of his tradition and lineage. Begin, he says, by visualizing “everything as far as you can see, as the palace of lotus light (*padma ’od kyi pho brang*), complete in all its features”. This “palace” is the spiritual dwelling of the eighth-century Padmasambhava, regarded as the patriarch of Tibetan tantric Buddhism and the one who brought the teaching from India:

Visualize yourself at the centre of the palace, and think of yourself as having the nature of the *dākinī Yeshe Tsogyal*. This will ensure that you are a fit receptacle for the empowerments, arouse the primal wisdom of bliss and emptiness, and create a connection with the guidance she had from her teacher. In form however, visualize yourself

as *Vajrayoginī*. She is red, with one face, two arms, and three eyes. She is gazing longingly at the heart of the teacher – “longingly” here expressing a sense of impatience to be with the teacher, this being the only source of joy. With her right hand she is playing a small skull-drum (*ḍamarū*) held up in the air, awakening beings from the sleep of ignorance and confusion. Her left hand is resting on her hip, holding the curved knife that cuts the root of the three poisons. She is naked except for her bone ornaments and garlands of flowers. She is visible but insubstantial, like a rainbow shining in the sky.

Suspended in space, an arrow’s length above her head, is a lotus of many kinds of jewels with a hundred thousand petals, in full bloom. Upon it is a sun disc and upon that a moon disc. On this throne sits your glorious root teacher, that incomparable treasure of compassion, the embodiment of the *buddhas* of past, present and future, in the form of the great *guru* of *Oḍḍiyāna* (*i.e.* Padmasambhava). His complexion is white tinged with red. He has one face, two arms and two legs. He is seated in the royal posture and is wearing a brocade cape, a monk’s robe, a long sleeved blue gown, and a lotus hat.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT pp.313–14

The visualization instructions continue in a similar vein. They include visualization of the entire ‘tree’ of root and lineage *lamas*, extending as far back as Padmasambhava, gathered in a crowd around the patriarch. The lineage may also be envisaged in two other ways: as one above the other, the entire lineage tree resting upon the head of the patriarch; or as the deity *Vajrasattva*, the one “jewel” who embodies all deities and *lamas* within himself:

Of the whole inconceivable infinity of peaceful and wrathful *yi dam* deities, there is not one whom he does not embody. While you meditate on him, consider him as being one in essence with your own root teacher. This is the practice of *guru yoga* ‘in the manner of the jewel which includes all’.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT p.279

Tantric practices include an array of preliminary or preparatory exercises (*sngon ’gro*), both external and internal, that are intended for the “accumulation of merit and wisdom” and preparation of the practitioner’s mind for higher forms of meditation. Patrul Rinpoche says that all these can be considered under “seven branches” or categories, which are given a different slant or focus depending upon the primary practice or ritual with which they are associated. Because the highest “field of merit” is the *guru*, these many preliminary practices are also included in *guru yoga*; and in some descriptions, *guru yoga* is understood to consist solely of preliminary practices.

The “seven branches” are: prostrations; making offerings of food or other items; confession of sins; feeling happiness at the virtue and good fortune of others; requesting the *buddhas* to ‘turn the wheel of *Dharma*’ – to impart their teachings; requesting the *guru* not to enter *nirvāṇa* in order that they may continue to work for the spiritual good of others; and dedicating the merit of one’s spiritual practices and devotion to the benefit of other sentient beings.⁴

Prostration is regarded as the antidote to pride, and is to be performed externally with the body and internally by visualization. While prostrating, Patrul Rinpoche suggests visualizing

a hundred, then a thousand, then innumerable bodies like your own,
as numerous as the particles of dust in the universe. At the same time,
visualize that all beings, as infinite as space itself, are prostrating
with you.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT p.317

To avoid distraction – performing the bodily prostrations mechanically while “looking around everywhere” – mind and speech should be occupied by focusing on the recitation of appropriate texts and prayers. The bodily prostrations, too, involve complex movements, requiring concentration:

I join my hands above my head
like an opening lotus bud,
and with countless bodies amassed in clouds
I prostrate to the *buddhas* of the ten directions.

Mahānirvāṇa Sūtra, in WMPT p.318

Patrul Rinpoche instructs:

Put your hands together and place them on the crown of your head, then at your throat, and then at your heart, to purify the obscurations of body, speech, and mind respectively. Then touch the floor with your body at the five points – the forehead, the palms of the two hands, and the two knees – in order to purify the obscurations of the five poisons and obtain the blessings of body, speech, mind, qualities, and activity. Then stand up straight, put your hands together again and continue the prostrations in the same way.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT pp.318–19

He adds that the prostrations should be performed mindfully:

It is not right to wave your arms around without placing your hands together; nor should you just bend forward without touching your

knees and forehead to the ground; nor should you stay bent over when you get up, without standing up straight again. To prostrate like that is disrespectful. It is said that the fully ripened effects of doing prostration without standing up straight is to be reborn as a hunchback dwarf. We do prostrations in the hope of benefiting from them, so there is no point in doing them in a way that will only result in a deformed body.

Even if you cannot do many prostrations, make the effort to ensure that however many you can do, they are all done impeccably. It is meaningless to try to make prostrations easier by doing them on a slope, such as the side of a hill, or by any other such methods.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT p.319

He goes on to add that although there are many other ways to perform prostrations as “a gesture of homage and respect”, the most important thing is the focus and the correct mental attitude. “In this way, you should let the teacher’s outer, inner and secret qualities be imprinted on you, like a *tsa tsa* (a small clay icon of a deity) coming out of its mould.” Prostrations done in the right way, he maintains, “bring immeasurable benefits”.⁵

The second of the “seven branches” is the making of offerings, and Patrul Rinpoche explains that for these to be effective, the principles of a devotional and focused mental attitude are again applicable. “As many offerings” should be made “as resources permit, . . . without miserliness, hypocrisy, or ostentation. These offerings are just support for your concentration.” Following external offerings, internal offerings should be performed mentally by means of visualization,

filling the entire world and the whole of space with all the offerings of the human and celestial realms: flowers, incense, lamps, perfumed water, nourishments, palaces, landscapes, mansions, pleasure gardens, the seven attributes of royalty and the eight auspicious symbols, with the sixteen *vajra* goddesses dancing and singing, each one playing her own particular musical instrument. . . .

Whatever we have the power to offer, the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* have the power to accept. So mentally take all the wealth that has no owner in all the human and celestial realms throughout the universe and make an offering of it. Then manifest as much wealth as you can with your imagination and offer that too. You can accumulate exactly the same merit in this way as you would if all those things were your own real possessions. You never need to think that you have nothing to offer. Whatever you or others have, and whatever you see, let your first thought always be to offer it to the three jewels and the root and lineage teachers. Mentally take whatever you find beautiful as you pass by, even pure flowing water or fields of flowers, and offer it all to the

three jewels, thus perfecting the accumulation of merit and wisdom in the midst of your other activities.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT pp.321–22

The third of the “seven branches” is the open confession of misdeeds:

Confess by first thinking, “With intense shame and regret, I openly confess all my downfalls and harmful deeds, those I remember and those I do not, all the unmentionably negative things I have done in all my lives in *samsāra* from time without beginning. . . . From now on, I will never repeat those misdeeds.”

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT p.322

Confession is made while bearing in mind the positive antidotes to the imperfections that have resulted in misdeeds. The accompanying visualization recommended by Patrul Rinpoche is to imagine all misdeeds and imperfections gathered together in a black heap on the tongue being destroyed by rays of lights pouring forth from the body, speech, and mind.

The fourth category of preliminary exercises is to rejoice at the turning of the great wheel of *Dharma* by the multitude of *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, and at the good and positive deeds of other sentient beings.

The fifth category is to imagine being in the presence of the *buddhas*, *bodhisattvas* and the vast array of other beings who work for the spiritual benefit of sentient beings, but who have “grown tired” of the “ungrateful and discouraging attitude” shown by those they would help, and who are intending to go into retirement, remaining in a “state of peace without teaching”. The practice is to visualize making a multitude of offerings to the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*, exhorting them to continue with their teaching.

The sixth category is similar to the fifth, and consists of entreating the *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas* who have completed their work for other sentient beings, whether in this world or the spiritual realms, not to enter a *nirvāṇa* from which they do not return, but to remain and continue with their work.

Finally, the seventh category is to dedicate the merit acquired by oneself and others by performing these practices to the benefit of all sentient beings:

Never forget to perform the dedication at the end of any meritorious act, great or small. Any source of merit not dedicated in this way will bear fruit only once and will then be exhausted. But whatever is dedicated to ultimate enlightenment will never be exhausted, even after bearing fruit a hundred times. Instead, it will increase and grow until perfect buddhahood is attained.

Patrul Rinpoche, Words of My Perfect Teacher, WMPT pp.325–26

As Patrul Rinpoche says, there are many variants on the theme, and various practices that are included in *guru yoga*. Sogyal Rinpoche, for instance, also from the *Nyingma* school, writes that there are four main stages to *guru yoga*: “invocation; merging your mind with the master through his heart essence, the *mantra*; receiving the blessing or empowerment; and uniting your mind with the master and resting in the nature of *rig pa* (pure awareness).”⁶ He describes “invocation” as a process of visualization:

Sit quietly. From the depths of your heart, invoke in the sky in front of you the embodiment of the truth in the person of your master, a saint, or an enlightened being.

Try to visualize the master or *buddha* as alive, and as radiant and translucent as a rainbow. Believe with complete trust that all the blessings and qualities of the wisdom, compassion, and power of all the *buddhas* and enlightened beings are embodied in him or her.

If you have difficulty visualizing the master, imagine this embodiment of truth simply as a being of light, or try to feel his or her perfect presence there in the sky before you: the presence of all the *buddhas* and masters. Let all the inspiration, joy, and awe you then feel take the place of visualization. Trust, simply, that the presence you are invoking is really there. The Buddha himself said: “Whoever thinks of me, I am in front of them.” My master Dudjom Rinpoche used to say that it does not matter if at the beginning you cannot visualize; what is more important is to feel the presence in your heart, and know that this presence embodies the blessings, compassion, energy, and wisdom of all the *buddhas*.

Then, relaxing and filling your heart with the master’s presence, invoke him or her very strongly with all your heart and mind; with total trust, call upon him or her inwardly: “Help me, inspire me to purify all my *karma* and negative emotions, and to realize the true nature of my mind!”

Then, with deep devotion, merge your mind with the master, and rest your mind in his or her wisdom mind. And as you do so, give yourself up to the master completely, saying to yourself something like: “Help me, now. Take care of me. Fill me with your joy and energy, your wisdom and compassion. Gather me into the loving heart of your wisdom mind. Bless my mind; inspire my understanding.” Then, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (1910–1991) says, “There is no doubt that the blessing will enter your heart.”

When we undertake this practice, it is a direct, skilful, and powerful way to carry us beyond our ordinary mind and into the pure realm of the wisdom of *rig pa*. There, we recognize, come to discover, and acknowledge that all *buddhas* are present.

So, feeling the living presence of Buddha, of Padmasambhava, of your master, and simply opening your heart and mind to the embodiment of truth, really does bless and transform your mind. As you invoke the Buddha, your own *buddha*-nature is inspired to awaken and blossom, as naturally as a flower in sunlight.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.150–51

Invoking the presence of the *guru* leads naturally to the use of a *mantra* to deepen the experience. This is the “main part of the practice”:

When I come to this part of the practice, merging my mind with the master through the *mantra*, I recite the *mantra* *Aum āḥ hūṃ vajra guru padma siddhi hūṃ*, which I think of as actually being Padmasambhava, and the blessing of all the masters, in the form of sound. I imagine my whole being filled with him, and I feel, as I recite the *mantra* – which is his heart essence – that it vibrates and pervades me, as if hundreds of little Padmasambhavas in the form of sound were circulating inside me, transforming my whole being.

Using the *mantra*, then, offer your heart and soul in fervent and one-pointed devotion, and merge and mix and blend your mind with Padmasambhava or your master. Gradually you will feel yourself coming closer to Padmasambhava, and closing the gap between you and his wisdom mind. Slowly, through the blessing and power of this practice, you will find you actually experience your mind being transformed into the wisdom mind of Padmasambhava and the master: you begin to recognize their indivisibility. Just as if you put your finger into water, it will get wet, and if you put it into fire, it will burn, so if you invest your mind in the wisdom mind of the *buddhas*, it will transform into their wisdom nature.

What happens is that gradually your mind begins to find itself in the state of *rig pa*, as the innermost nature of mind is nothing other than the wisdom mind of all the *buddhas*. It is as if your ordinary mind gradually dies and dissolves, and your pure awareness, your *buddha*-nature, your inner teacher, is revealed. This is the true meaning of ‘blessing’ – a transformation in which your mind transcends into the state of the absolute.

This ‘maturing of the blessing’ is the heart and main part of the practice, to which you should devote the most time when you do the *guru yoga* practice.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.151

The final stage of *guru yoga*, according to Sogyal Rinpoche, is empowerment:

Imagine now that from the master thousands of brilliant rays of light stream out toward you, and penetrate you, purifying, healing, blessing, empowering, and sowing in you the seeds of enlightenment. To make the practice as rich and inspiring as possible, you could imagine it unfolding in these three phases:

First, dazzling light, crystal white in colour, bursts out from the forehead of the master and enters the energy centre in your forehead and fills your whole body. This white light represents the blessing of the body of all the *buddhas*. It cleanses all the negative *karma* you have accumulated through negative actions of the body; it purifies the subtle channels of your psychophysical system; it gives you the blessing of the body of the *buddhas*; it empowers you for visualization practice; and it opens you to the realization of that compassionate energy of *rig pa*, the nature of mind, that is manifesting in everything.

Second, a stream of ruby red light shines out from the throat of the master into the energy centre at your throat, filling your entire body. This red light represents the blessing of the speech of all the *buddhas*: it cleanses all the negative *karma* you have accumulated through harmful speech; it purifies the inner air of your psychophysical system; it gives you the blessing of the speech of the *buddhas*; it empowers you for *mantra* practice; and it opens you to the realization of the radiance of the nature of *rig pa*.

Third, a stream of shimmering blue light, the colour of lapis lazuli, bursts out from the heart of the master into the energy centre at your heart, and fills your whole body. This blue light represents the blessing of the mind of the *buddhas*: it cleanses all the negative *karma* you have accumulated through negative activity of your mind; it purifies the creative essence, or energy, within your psychophysical system; it gives you the blessing of the mind of the *buddhas*; it empowers you for advanced *yoga* practices; and it opens you to the realization of the primordial purity of the essence of *rig pa*.

Know and feel that you are now empowered, through the blessing, with the indestructible body, speech and mind of Padmasambhava, of all the *buddhas*.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.151–52

Finally, the pure awareness of *rig pa* is attained:

Now let the master dissolve into light and become one with you, in the nature of your mind. Recognize beyond any doubt that this sky-like nature of your mind is the absolute master. Where else would all the enlightened beings be but in the *rig pa*, in the nature of your mind?

Secure in that realization, in a state of spacious and carefree ease, you rest in the warmth, glory, and blessing of your absolute nature. You have arrived at the original ground: the primordial purity of natural simplicity. As you rest in this state of *rig pa*, you recognize the truth of Padmasambhava's words: "Mind itself is Padmasambhava; there is no practice or meditation apart from that."

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS pp.152–53

The many other practices included in *guru yoga* are mostly variations on the same themes. Visualization, for instance, is practised, but the details of what is visualized may differ. It may also be necessary to set aside considerable periods of time for the practice. In the *Kālachakra* tradition (predominantly a practice of the *Geluk* school), the recommendation is to practise *guru yoga* six times a day. This is known as 'six-session *guru yoga*':

Why do you need to do this practice every day? When you received the initiation, you took *bodhisattva* and tantric vows. You made a commitment to do the six-session *guru yoga* practice six times a day. You also vowed to achieve enlightenment in order to be of benefit to all sentient beings. If you want to be able to achieve enlightenment quickly, then you have to take on more responsibilities and commitments. It will not be possible without hard work. . . .

If you lack time to do a full *Kālachakra* six-session *guru yoga* practice with all its visualizations, one can simply meditate on the essence of the practice. Even though you are very busy and have many responsibilities, it is important to hold the essence of *Kālachakra* practice in your mind at all times. You need to remain focused on the essential points: refuge, renunciation, *bodhichitta*, accumulation of merit, and right view. This is what is of benefit.

*Jhado Rinpoche, Essence of the Kālacakra Six-Session
Guru Yoga Practice, in ALSE p.458*

Given the human capacity to forget the temporary nature of life in this world, mystics and spiritual teachers have never tired of pointing out that life is a journey towards death; and that what happens at and after death is directly related to the way in which life has been lived and the attitudes inculcated. With this in mind, Sogyal Rinpoche describes the benefits of the practice of *guru yoga* in the intermediate, after-death state (*bardo*):

To create the most positive possible imprint on the mind-stream before death is essential. The most effective practice of all to achieve this is a simple practice of *guru yoga*, where the dying person merges his or her mind with the wisdom mind of the master, or Buddha, or any

enlightened being. Even if you cannot visualize your master at this moment, try at least to remember him, think of him in your heart, and die in a state of devotion. When your consciousness awakens again after death, this imprint of the master's presence will awaken with you, and you will be liberated. If you die remembering the master, then the possibilities of his or her grace are limitless: even the display of sound, light and colour in the *bardo* of *dharmatā* (inherent nature) may arise as the master's blessing and the radiance of his or her wisdom nature.

If the master is present at the deathbed, he or she will ensure that the mind-stream of the dying person is imprinted with his or her presence. The master may, to retrieve the dying person from other distractions, make some striking and significant remark. He or she might say in a loud voice: "Remember me!" The master will draw the dying person's attention in whatever way is necessary, and create an indelible impression that will return as a memory of the master in the *bardo* state.

Sogyal Rinpoche, Tibetan Book of Living and Dying, TLDS p.240

See also: **nishpanna-krama**, **sngon 'gro**, **utpatti-krama**.

1. Dilgo Khyentse, *Wish-Fulfilling Jewel*, WJGY p.3.
2. Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, WMPT p.313.
3. Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, WMPT p.317.
4. Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, WMPT pp.317–32.
5. Patrul Rinpoche, *Words of My Perfect Teacher*, WMPT p.320.
6. Sogyal Rinpoche, *Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*, TLDS pp.149–50.

gyān mārg, **gyān mat**, **gyān yog(a)** (H) *Lit.* teaching (*mat*), path (*mārg*), or *yoga* of knowledge (*gyān*); *Vedānta* philosophy. See **jñāna yoga**.

ḥabs al-nafas (A/P), **ḥabs-i dam** (P) *Lit.* containment (*ḥabs*) of the breath (*dam*, *nafas*); *ḥabs* also means imprisonment; a Sufi term for breath control as a meditative practice; also called *pās-i anfās* (watching the breaths).

See also: **pās-i anfās dāshtan**, **prāṇāyāma**.

ḥaḍrah (A), **ḥaẓrat** (P) *Lit.* presence, manifestation, appearance, sign; in Sufism, the presence of God, the presence of a spiritual master, the manifestation or presence of the Divine at a particular level of creation; also used to designate a form of group *dhikr* (remembrance), the purpose of *dhikr* being to enter into the divine presence; sometimes used as a name for *dhikr al-ṣadr* (invocation

of the heart, which involves chanting and dancing); also, an epithet of respect and reverence, used in both secular and religious contexts, as in Ḥaẓrat ‘Ināyat Khān, Ḥaẓrat ‘Īsá (Jesus), or Ḥaẓrat Maryam (Mary, the mother of Jesus).

See also: **dhikr, al-Ḥaḍarāt al-Ilāhīyah al-Khams** (4.1).

hagah (He) *Lit.* utter, speak, repeat; spiritually, to repeat words as part of a method of meditation with the intention of focusing the mind; a verb from which three terms for meditation – *higayon*, *hagig*, and *hagut* – are derived.

The renowned eleventh-century biblical commentator Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo Yizḥaki, 1040–1105) observes that *hagah* means contemplation (*hitbonenut*).¹ The *Midrash* to the biblical book of *Ecclesiastes* also says that “the heart meditates (*hagah*).”²

In some instances, *hagah* has connotations of both speech and thought; sometimes it refers to a non-verbal human expression of sound. Rabbi David Kimḥi (1160–1235), a noted linguist and biblical commentator, wrote that *hagah* denotes a sound or thought repeated over and over like the cooing of a dove or the roaring of a lion.³ The common factor in these uses of the term is the repetition of words or sounds, either mentally or audibly.

It is surmised that in biblical times, the prophets, mystics and spiritual seekers practised a form of meditation involving the repetition of words or sounds, either audibly or inaudibly. Just as the ramblings and distractions of the mind are universally recognized as the greatest human impediment to awareness of the Divine, so too is control of the mind through concentration on particular verbal formulae a universally used solution to the problem.

Higayon, hagig and hagah are found in the Psalms:

May the words of my mouth
and the meditation (*higayon*) of my heart
be acceptable unto You, O God,
my rock and my redeemer.

Psalms 19:15, KB

In Your name I lift up my hands. . . .
On my bed I remember (*zakhar*) You,
and meditate (*hagah*) on You in the watches of the night.

Psalms 63:5, 7; cf. KB

Give ear to my words, O Lord,
consider my meditation (*hagig*).
Hearken to the voice of my cry,
my King and my God,
For to You I will pray (*et-palel*).

My voice you will hear in the morning, O Lord;
 In the morning I will direct my prayer to You,
 and will wait expectantly.

Psalms 5:2–4; cf. KB

The *Psalms* and the *Talmud* also speak of *higayon* on the harp or lyre, which refers to inner ecstasy and is an embodiment of “the reward of the righteous in the world to come.”⁴ In *Meditation and the Bible*, the grammarian and biblical scholar Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan understands this “reward” of “joy” as the “ecstasy of the mystical experience”. He also interprets a passage from the *Psalms* as a reference to meditation rather than to external singing and the playing of musical instruments.⁵

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
 and to sing praise to your Name, O most High:
 To relate our steadfast love in the morning,
 and your faithfulness every night,
 Upon an instrument of ten strings and upon the harp (*nevel*):
 to the melody (*higayon*) of the lyre (*kinor*).

Psalms 92:2–4; cf. KB

Based on Rabbi David Kimḥi’s etymological analysis of *hagah*, Aryeh Kaplan also shows⁶ that the same root is used to express removal and purification, as in the advice given in *Proverbs*: “Remove (*hagah*) the dross from silver, . . . remove (*hagah*) the wicked from before the king.”⁷

An alternative derivation was suggested by Rabbi Solomon Pappenheim (1740–1814), a German philologist and writer of a remarkable Hebrew thesaurus, *Yeri’at Shlomo*. Pappenheim maintains that *hagah* comes from a two-letter root, *h-g*, related to *nahag*, which means to lead or to steer, suggesting focused activity directed towards one goal, perhaps a meditative practice that directs the thoughts to a particular focus.⁸ Kaplan concludes from this that *hagah* as a reference to meditation denotes “the purifying and clearing of the mind, so as to direct it toward one goal”. He continues by explaining that the Hebrew word *hegeh*, from the same root, means the rudder of a ship. In reference to meditation, therefore, *hagah* provides “the mind with a rudder and helm so that it no longer drifts aimlessly in a sea of thought”.⁹

Kaplan also relates *hagah* to *gah*, meaning brightness, from which the term *nogah* (glow, as in the glow of dawn) is derived. He goes on to relate *nogah* to the inner spiritual light, including the glow of light and fire in Ezekiel’s vision,¹⁰ which he suggests is the light of the true inner meditative dawn.¹¹ *Nogah* is one of the four kinds of spiritual light described by kabbalists as appearing during practice of the four paths of concentration. The four kinds of inner light are: *bahir* (brilliant), *zohar* (radiant), *muvhak* (scintillating) and *nogah*, the light that receives primal *Zohar*.¹²

Kaplan discusses many other related roots, all enlarging and expanding upon the impact of *hagah* (as meditation) on the mental and spiritual state of the practitioner. The practice can be summarized, he concludes, as “directed existence”, using methods involving repetition of sounds or words in order to focus and clear the mind.¹³

Repetition of verbal formulae has long been practised as part of Jewish meditation. The *Merkavah* text *Hekhalot Rabbati*, from the talmudic period (C1st–6th CE), contains an instruction to repeat a phrase in order to bring about a state of consciousness in which the mystic can journey through inner realms. Later Jewish mystics used phrases, biblical verses, or even portions of the *Mishnah* as formulae repeated audibly or mentally to help concentrate the mind. The Hasidic master Rabbi Naḥman of Bratslav (C18th–19th), taught the formulaic repetition of *Ribbono shel ‘olam* (Lord of the universe), a phrase that had been used for meditation as early as the first century CE by the talmudic scholar Shim‘on ben Shetaḥ, and perhaps even in earlier times.¹⁴

See also: **hitbonenut**.

1. Rashi, *Commentary on Joshua* 1:8; *Psalms* 1:2, 63:7, 37:30, in *MBAK* p.111.
2. *Kohelet Rabbah* 1:16, in *MBAK* p.111.
3. Rabbi David Kimḥi, “HaGaH,” *Sefer ha-Shorashim, SSDK*, in *MBAK* p.112.
4. *Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Eruvin* 21a, *Arakhin* 13b.
5. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* pp.113–14.
6. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* p.113.
7. *Proverbs* 25:4–5.
8. Solomon Pappenheim, *Yiri ‘ot Shelomo*, *YSP1* fol.99b, in *MBAK* p.113.
9. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* pp.113–14.
10. *Ezekiel* 1:4.
11. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* pp.116–17.
12. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* pp.116–17.
13. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK*, p.115.
14. Aryeh Kaplan, *Jewish Meditation*, *JMAK* pp.56–57.

hamshakhat ha-maḥshavah (He) *Lit.* drawing down (*hamshakhat*) the divine thought (*ha-maḥshavah*); a kabbalistic term for drawing down the divine will, influence, or *shefa* (outpouring, overflow).

In his *Sefer Oẓar Ḥayyim* (‘Treasury of Life’), Rabbi Isaac of Akko (1250–1340) describes the practice, providing detailed instructions on how to utter each word and letter of the prayer, *Shema Yisrael* (‘Hear, O Israel’), especially the names of God *Yahweh* and *Elohim*. While reciting the syllables of the prayer, a meditator should, in his focused imagination, visualize each *sefirah* (emanation of a divine quality) and its associated divine power

or quality, moving from one to the next higher until he reaches the Source, which is *Ayn-Sof* (the Infinite).¹ He should then draw down the divine power into himself,

in a continuous path of meditative movement and passage from the heights of Infinity (*Ayn-Sof*) down into his own mind. In this conception, a line of connections is posited between the mystic's consciousness (his *sekhel*), the *sefirot* that sit atop his head (and which presumably send forth divine energy into the devotee), and the wellspring of *Ayn-Sof* that stands supreme. Such is the meaning of the envisioned sefirotic ladder atop the mystic's head – he is instructed to ascend and descend the rungs of Divinity, all the while retaining an awareness of the manner in which his own self ... is linked to the continuous chain of divine energy. He ascends from below to the summit of Infinity, and, by necessity, he returns to himself (via the lower *sefirot*) once again.

Eitan Fishbane, As Light Before Dawn, LBDF pp.201–2

The anonymous author of *Sha'arei Zedek* ('Gates of Righteousness'), who is thought to have been Isaac's contemporary and a disciple of Abraham Abulafia, describes the same practice. The author says that by this means, a practitioner will come to know certain things, though he will be unaware of how he acquired that knowledge:

He should greatly refine and draw downward (*le-hamshekh*) the thought (*maḥshavah*), and seek to concentrate (*va-yitboded*) on it, that no man should contaminate his thought; ... and he will see that he has great power in all the wisdoms, for such is its nature; and he will say that a given matter was revealed to him as if a prophecy, and he will not know the cause.

Sha'arei Zedek, SZGS fol.59b, in SEKI pp.111–12

Adding a magical element to the practice, Moses Cordovero (1522–1570), in his *Pardes Rimmonim* ('Orchard of Pomegranates'), ascribes specific colours to each *sefirah*. He recommends both the visualization and wearing of these colours in order to draw down the *shefa* that is associated with each *sefirah*, in order to invoke the flow of divine energy that bears its imprint. He also counsels the wearing of amulets:

There is no doubt that the colours can align you to the functioning of the *sefirot* and the drawing down of their overflow (*shefa*). Thus, when a person needs to draw down the overflow (*shefa*) of mercy (*raḥamim*) from the (*sefirah* of) *Hesed*, let him imagine the name of the *sefirah*

with the colour that is appropriate to what he needs, in front of him. If he (focuses upon) supreme *Ḥesed*, (let him imagine) the outermost white. . . . Likewise, when he undertakes some particular activity and is in need of the overflow (*shefa*) of (the attribute of Judgment), let him dress in red clothes and imagine the form (of the letters of) the tetragrammaton (the four-letter Name of God, *YHWH*) in red; and so on in the case of all the practices that cause the descent of the outpourings (*shefa*). . . . Certainly in this manner (we may explain) the meaning of the amulets. When a person prepares an amulet for *Ḥesed*, let him imagine the (divine) name in a bright white, since then the functioning of that name will be augmented.

Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim 10:1.1, PRC fol.59b; cf. in HEMI pp.67–68

Cordovero also advocates drawing down the *shefa* through the use of divine names, including a ‘hidden’, seventy-two-letter name, of which Abulafia developed his own understanding:

Several of the early ones explained that by the combination and permutation of the seventy-two-letter holy name or the other names, after great concentration (*hitbodedut*), the righteous man, who is worthy and enlightened (*maskil*) in such matters, will have a portion of the divine Voice (*bat Kol*) revealed to him, in the sense of, “The spirit of God spoke in me, and His word was on my lips.”²

*Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim 30:3.2,
PRC fol.69b; cf. in HEMI p.69, SEKI p.128*

Cordovero died young, and Rabbi Isaac Luria became the leader of the fellowship of kabbalists in Safed. According to Luria’s disciple Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital, two phases of spiritual practice are needed to reunite the soul with its divine Source, the primal divine Light: firstly, the ascent of the spirit, and secondly, the drawing down of the spiritual light to fill the soul. This is achieved by concentration practices involving the repetition and visualization of transposed and recombined permutations of the letters and names of God, the angels, and various biblical passages, as well as intense meditation exercises known as *kavanot* (intentions) and *yihudim* (unification):³

For this drawing down of the (divine) thought (*hamshakhat ha-maḥshavah*) certainly never comes about by itself, but (is effected) solely by the *kavanot* and *yihudim* transmitted to the disciple by the prophet who taught him the art of prophecy. . . . By these *yihudim* he was then enabled to draw down the light and the thought (*maḥshavah*) according to his wish, and this is the ultimate purpose of the whole subject of prophecy.

Ḥayyim Vital, Sha’arei Kedushah 3:6, SKHV, SKHZ p.59

According to kabbalists such as Vital, 'drawing down' the divine presence into the soul is the correct or positive form of spiritual practice, contrasted with the attempt to 'ascend' to the spiritual regions through the manipulation of divine names and divine 'oaths (*hashba'ot*)'. Vital's school believed that 'ascension' practices magnified the ego, since the individual saw himself ascending to God's level by his own volition. Becoming receptive to divine grace and being filled with His presence was regarded as a superior practice, resulting in the descent of the divine will.⁴

See also: **hashba'ot**, **ruḥaniyyut**, **shefa** (3.1), **yīḥudim**.

1. Isaac of Akko, *Sefer Oẓar Ḥayyim*, SOHI fol.39a, in SEKI p.150 (n.53).
2. 2 Samuel 23:2.
3. See R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, "The Safed Revival," in JS2 pp.26–28; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, PSHC p.281.
4. See R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, "The Safed Revival," in JS2 p.27.

hanka fuza (J) *Lit.* sitting (*za*) in the half-lotus (*hanka*) position; the half-lotus posture used in *zazen*. See **zabuton**.

hashba'ot (He) *Lit.* oaths, curses, magical formulae, incantations; used by Jewish kabbalists for practices that employ repetition of certain names, letters or phrases with the intention of controlling divine forces; formulae invoked to help the ascent through various levels or gates in the inner realms; regarded by some early kabbalists as a negative form of spiritual practice, liable to increase a practitioner's ego, and contrasted with practices designed to invoke the descent of divine grace to a humble and supplicating soul.

The practice of *hashba'ot* is contrasted with the 'positive' practices of *yīḥudim* (repetition of unifying divine names) and *hazkarat shemot* (remembrance of names). In the practice of *yīḥudim*, names are created by combinations of Hebrew letters which are then repeated in numerous different sequences. In the practice of *hazkarat shemot*, repetition of the attributive names of God is intended to draw down divine energies upon the devotee. The purpose of repeating these names is to put the devotee in tune with the divine energies and thus engender receptivity to the divine will, so that the divine outpouring (*shefa*) may flow from the source into the individual mind and soul.

Yīḥudim and *hazkarat shemot* are formulae of descent; *hashba'ot* are formulae of ascent. Early kabbalists discouraged the practice of *hashba'ot* as being negative and presumptuous, because they felt that it was sinful for man to try to 'ascend' to God's level, since it implied the use of magic to attain supernatural powers, and inevitably resulted in magnification of the

ego. They felt that man should become receptive and let the divine power or grace ‘descend’ upon him and then take him up.

According to Abraham Abulafia (1240–1291), however, *hashba’ot* could be used for positive purposes through ascent – communion with God – rather than for attaining supernatural powers. Many of the meditation practices that he taught involved ascent. Rabbi Ḥayyim Vital (1543–1620) attributed the ascent of the *Merkavah* mystics (C1st BCE – C10th CE) to the use of *hashba’ot*.¹

See also: **hazkarat shemot, kavanot, merkavah, yiḥudim.**

1. See R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, “The Safed Revival,” in *JS2* p.27.

haṭha yoga (S/H) *Lit.* *yoga* of force (*haṭha*); the *yoga* of vigorous physical discipline; an alternative etymology sees *haṭha* as derived from *ha* (sun) and *tha* (moon); hence, the *yoga* of joining the sun and the moon, corresponding to the *pingalā* and *iḍā*, the positive and negative currents of *prāṇa* (subtle life energy) in the body.

Haṭha yoga consists chiefly of physical postures (*āsanas* and *mudrās*); muscular locks or contractions (*bandhas*), often as a part of an *āsana* or *mudrā*; practices or techniques (*karmas, kriyās*) for purifying the body; and control of the breath and subtle life energy (*prāṇāyāma*).¹ One of the yogic texts, the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā*, advises:

Like unto an unbaked earthen pot thrown in water, the body is soon decayed (in this world). Bake it hard in the fire of *haṭha yoga* in order to strengthen and purify it.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:8; cf. *GSV* p.2

Haṭha yoga’s preoccupation with physical exercises stems from the understanding that the gross or physical body (*sthūla-sharīra*) is connected with and affects the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy) and the complex system of *nāḍīs* (channels) and *chakras* (wheels, centres) within the body through which the *prāṇa* flows and is administered. The health and well-being of the physical body is also determined by the flow and balance of *prāṇa*. It is by purifying and awakening inner consciousness of these energies by means of *prāṇāyāma* that the aspiring yogi rises from the physical body and, passing through the *brahmarandhra*, the subtle ‘opening’ in the crown of the head, experiences *samādhi* (absorption) in *sahasrāra* (‘thousand-rayed’, the thousand-petalled lotus).

The purification, balancing and harmonizing of the subtle *prāṇa* is greatly aided by the *dhautis* (cleansing) of the physical body, together with the various

āsanas, *mudrās*, *bandhas*, and breathing exercises. *Haṭha yoga* shares many elements with *aṣṭāṅga* (also called *rāja yoga*) and other forms of *yoga* of which the essential meditational technique is *prāṇāyāma*.

Nevertheless, *haṭha yoga* is a means to an end, not the end itself, as the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, one of the definitive yogic texts, says:

All the practices of *haṭha* and *laya yoga* (absorption *yoga*) are but the means to attain *rāja yoga* (*samādhi*). One who attains *rāja yoga* is victorious over *kāla* (death, time).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:103; cf. *HYPM* p.590

Traditionally, there are said to be 8,400,000 different *āsanas* of which eighty-four were revealed to man by *Shiva*, who is commonly portrayed as the primal ascetic and yogi. The number relates to the wheel of eighty-four (*chaurāsī kā chakra*), the eighty-four *lakṣa* (a *lakṣa* is 100,000) categories of creature into which the soul can transmigrate. To these are added twenty-five or more other postures (*mudrās*) and six preliminary cleansing practices (*śaṭ-karmas*).

The *āsanas* include such postures as *siddhāsana*, *padmāsana* (lotus posture), and so on. The *mudrās* include the *mahāmudrā* and *khecharī-mudrā*, and several important *bandhas* like *mahābandha*, *uḍḍiyāna-bandha*, and *jālandhara-bandha*. The *śaṭ-karmas* are *dhauti-karma*, *neti-karma*, *vasti-karma*, *naulī-* or *laulikī-karma*, *trāṭaka-karma*, and *kapāla-bhāti*. All these are described below.

Many breathing exercises (*prāṇāyāma*), integrated with the various *āsanas*, *mudrās* and *bandhas*, are also employed – these being variants of *pūraka* (inhalation), *rechaka* (exhalation), and *kumbhaka* (retention). Great store is placed on the voluntary cessation or retention of the breath (*kevala-kumbhaka*), during which the yogi enjoys a state of great peace and tranquillity wherein the normal activity of the mind is also suspended (*unmanī*, *samādhi*).

The aims of *haṭha yoga* include the control and strengthening of the body and mind, the awakening and control of the *kuṇḍalinī* together with the currents of psychic energy and subtle life force or *prāṇa* within the body, and the enjoyment of *siddhis* (miraculous and psychic powers). In traditional yogic and tantric texts, *haṭha yoga* is generally seen as an integral part of the preparation for *rāja yoga*, and it is impossible to separate the two into distinct practices.

The body is first cleansed, purified and strengthened by the *śaṭ-karmas* and the various *āsanas*. These, together with the *mudrās* and the *bandhas*, are integrated with increasingly involved breathing exercises and the repetition of *mantras* with the attention focused at different *chakras*. Together, these practices combine to cleanse the *nāḍīs*, the subtle channels of *prāṇa*. As the practice intensifies, it leads to the awakening of the latent pranic energy of

the *kuṇḍalinī*, lying ‘coiled up’ in the *mūlādhāra chakra*, at the rectum. The *kuṇḍalinī* or *prāṇa* then enters the central *nāḍī* in the spinal cord (*sushumṇā*) and rises up. Ultimately, it reaches the *ājñā chakra*, the centre between the eyebrows, also called the eye centre. From here, the yogi becomes absorbed in the *chidākāsha* (the ‘sky’ of the body), which is the source of the *prāṇas*. Piercing through this, with the help of inner sound (*nāda*), the yogi may then reach the *sahasrāra*. This is generally considered to be the culmination of the practice of *yoga*. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*, one of the primary texts on *haṭha yoga* says:

On hearing the *nāda*, the mind, like a cobra, immediately becomes captivated and oblivious to all else, and becoming one-pointed (*ekāgratā*), does not run elsewhere.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:96; cf. *HPSP* (4:97) p.168, *HYP* p.60

Comparing listening to the inner sound with other yogic practices, it asserts:

There is no *āsana* like *siddhāsana*, no *kumbhaka* like *kevala*, no *mudrā* like *khecharī*, and no *laya* (absorption) of mind like *nāda* (the inner sound).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:43; cf. *HYPM* p.116

All of these practices, taken together, are known as *rāja yoga*, while the *śaṭ-karmas*, together with the *āsanas*, *mudrās* and *bandhas* are the central part of *haṭha yoga*. *Prāṇāyāma* is a part of both *haṭha* and *rāja yoga*. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* observes:

In my opinion, those who are ignorant of *rāja yoga*, and practise only *haṭha yoga*, waste their energy fruitlessly.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 4:78; cf. *HYP* p.58

Nevertheless, *haṭha yoga* can be practised with great benefit simply for the purposes of physical health, relaxation, and mental well-being. This is the way that *haṭha yoga* is generally known in modern times, especially outside India. In this case, there is no concentration on the different *chakras*, no repetition of *mantras*, and no attempt to awaken the *kuṇḍalinī*. There are very occasional instances, however, where the *kuṇḍalinī* awakens spontaneously and the *chakras* open, usually (it is said) due to performance of the practice in past lives. It is also possible for those of a highly imaginative disposition to persuade themselves that their *kuṇḍalinī* has arisen or that their *chakras* have opened when this is not actually so.

For this and other reasons, it is always advisable to have a competent teacher, even if the *haṭha yoga* is practised purely for the purposes of physical

health. It is difficult to learn a system of integrated physical exercises from a book, since individuals vary in their strength and flexibility and often an individual cannot know whether the practice is being performed correctly and safely.

Traditionally, *yoga* was practised after withdrawal from worldly life. The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* paints an idyllic picture of a yogi's retreat:

The *haṭha yogī* should live alone in a small hermitage (*maṭha*) and practise in a place the length of a bow (one and a half metres), where there is no hazard from rocks, fire or water, and which is in a well administered and virtuous kingdom (nation or town), where good alms can easily be attained.

This is the description of the *yoga* hermitage (*maṭha*) as prescribed by the *siddhas* (adepts) for *haṭha yoga* practitioners. The room for *sādhana* (practice) should have a small door, without aperture (window), holes or cracks, being neither too high nor too low. It should be spotlessly clean, wiped with cow manure and free from animals or insects. Outside, there should be an open platform with thatched roof, a well, and a surrounding fence. The appearance of the hermitage should be pleasant.

In this manner, dwelling in the hermitage, without too much thinking, *yoga* should be practised in the manner instructed by the *guru*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:12–14; cf. *HYPM* pp.40, 43, 47

The writer then outlines the basic rules of conduct upon which the practice should be based, although lists of the ten *yamas* (restraints) and *niyamas* (observances) are absent from some manuscripts. In a later verse, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* also says that *ahiṃsā* is one of the *niyamas*,² although here it is listed as one of the *yamas*. As witnessed by the variations between extant manuscripts, the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* has had a history of redaction, something common among ancient texts where all copies were handwritten:

Overeating, exertion, talkativeness, (blind) adherence to rules, being in the company of common people and a vacillating mind are the six things that destroy *yoga*.

Enthusiasm, perseverance, discrimination, unshakable faith, courage and avoiding the company of common people are the six causes that bring success in *yoga*.

Non-violence (*ahiṃsā*), truth (*satya*), non-stealing (*asteya*), continence (*brahmacharya*), forgiveness (*kṣhamā*), fortitude (*dhṛiti*), compassion (*dayā*), humility (*ārjava*), moderate diet (*mitāhāra*) and cleanliness (*śauca*) are the ten *yamas* (restraints).

Self-discipline (*tapas*), contentment (*saṃtoṣha*), belief in God (*āstikya*), charity (*dāna*), worship of God (*Īshvara-pūjana*), listening to recitations of sacred scriptures (*siddhānta vākya shravana*), modesty (*hrī*), resolve (*mati*), recitation (*japa*, of *mantras*), and sacrifice (*huta*) are the ten *niyamas* (observances).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:15–16; cf. *HYPM* pp.50, 54, 56

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* outlines the basic practices:

The seven exercises appertaining to this training of the body are the following: purificatory, strengthening, steadying, calming, those leading to lightness, perception, and absorption.

1. Purification is acquired by the regular performance of the six practices (*ṣaṭ-karma*).
2. *Āsana* (posture) gives strength (*driḍhatā*).
3. *Mudrā* gives steadiness (*sthīratā*).
4. *Pratyāhāra* (detachment from the senses) gives calmness (*dhairyatā*).
5. *Prāṇāyāma* gives lightness (*laghimā*).
6. *Dhyāna* (meditation) gives perception (*pratyakṣatva*) of self.
7. *Samādhi* gives utter detachment (*nirliptatā*), which is verily the (highest) freedom.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:9–11; cf. *GSV* pp.2–3

The Ṣaṭ-karmas or Ṣaṭ-kriyās (Six Cleansing Practices)

The *ṣaṭ-karmas* (six practices) are sometimes called the *ṣaṭ-kriyās*, which has the same meaning. According to the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*:

Dhauti, *vasti*, *netī*, *trāṭaka*, *naulī*, and *kapāla-bhāti* – these are known as the *ṣaṭ-karma*. . . . They have manifold, wondrous results and are held in high esteem by eminent *yogīs*. . . .

By the *ṣaṭ-karmas*, one is freed from excesses of the *doṣhas* (bodily humours). Then *prāṇāyāma* is practised, and success is achieved without strain.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:22–23, 36, *HYPM* pp.186, 188, 224

1. *Dhauti-karma*, *dhauti-kriyā* (cleansing practice); also known as *vāso-dhauti* or *vastra-dhauti* (cloth cleansing).³ A bandage of fine cloth about three inches wide and five feet long is used. The cloth is soaked in water and as much as possible is swallowed, the amount being increased daily until the entire soaked cloth can be swallowed, the upper end being held firmly in the teeth. The cloth is then slowly pulled out through the mouth, and the stomach is thereby cleansed. The process is repeated until the cleansing is complete:

A strip of wet cloth, four digits wide (three inches) and fifteen hand-spans (about five feet) in length is slowly swallowed and then pulled out, as instructed by the *guru*. This is known as *dhauti*.

There is no doubt that coughs, asthma, diseases of the spleen, leprosy and twenty kinds of diseases caused by excess mucus are destroyed through the effects of *dhauti-karma*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:24–25; cf. *HYPM* pp.190, 196

The purpose of the practice is to cleanse the stomach and the intestines. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* describes various additional *dhautis*, which fall into four categories: *antar-dhauti* (internal cleansing), *danta-dhauti* (cleansing the teeth), *hṛid-dhauti* (cleansing the heart), and *mūla-shodhana* (cleansing the rectum). These categories are themselves further subdivided.⁴

In one, water is slowly swallowed and, by careful muscular contractions, passed through the stomach and intestines and out through the rectum (*vārisāra-dhauti*, cleansing by means of water). In another, the same exercise is performed with air (*vātasāra-dhauti*, cleansing by means of air). In another, the intestines are repeatedly pressed from the navel towards the spine in order to stimulate digestion (*agnisāra-dhauti*, cleansing by means of fire).

Other *dhautis* involve cleansing the root of the tongue, the external ear canal, the frontal sinuses, and cleaning the teeth with black catechu (acacia) powder. In other practices, vomiting is induced in order to rid the stomach of impurities. The purpose of all of these is to cleanse the body completely, so that good health may be maintained and illnesses eliminated, and so that the *prāṇas* may be balanced and able to rise up without hindrance or difficulty during the practice of *prāṇāyāma*.

2. *Vasti-karma, vasti-kriyā* (enema practice); a form of enema in which the practitioner – sitting in water up to the navel – draws up water through the rectum by means of muscular control, using a smooth and flexible tube such as a green bamboo stick about twelve inches long inserted into the anus. The water is held inside for some while and then forcibly expelled, thus cleansing the lower part of the intestines:

Sitting in *utkaṭāsana* (sitting on the heels), navel deep in water, insert a tube into the anus and contract the anus. This cleansing with water is called *vasti-karma*. Enlargement of the glands and spleen, and all diseases arising from excess wind (*vāta*), bile and mucus are eliminated from the body through the practice of *vasti*. By practising *jala* (water) *vasti*, the appetite increases, the body glows, excess *doshas* (bodily humours) are destroyed and the *dhātus* (fundamental bodily elements), senses, and mind are purified.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:26–28, *HYPM* pp.197, 200

Cleansing the bowels with water is known as *jala-vasti*. There is another kind of *vasti-karma* (*sthala-vasti*) practised without water:

Assuming the posture called *paschimottanāsana* (body folded forward along the outstretched legs, like a jackknife), let him move the intestines slowly downwards, then contract and dilate the sphincter muscle of the anus with *ashvinī-mudrā*. By this practice of *yoga*, constipation never occurs; it also increases gastric fire and cures flatulence.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:48–49; cf. GSV p.9

3. *Netī-karma, netī-kriyā*. Cleaning the nasal passage and upper part of the throat by passing a waxed silk thread through each of the nostrils in turn and bringing it out through the mouth:⁵

Insert a soft thread through the nose to the length of one handspan so that it comes out of the mouth. This is called *netī* by the *siddhas* (adepts). *Netī* cleanses the cranium and bestows clairvoyance. It also destroys all diseases that manifest above the throat.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:29–30; cf. HYPM pp.202, 206

4. *Naulī-karma, naulī-kriyā*. The rhythmic churning of the intestinal region. The practitioner sits erect in the lotus posture and, lowering the shoulders and keeping the back in a vertically upright position, moves the abdomen right and left, as well as up and down. This kind of churning movement of the abdomen removes all wind from the stomach and cleanses the inside:

Lean forward, protrude the abdomen and rotate (the muscles) from right to left with speed. This is called *naulī* by the *siddhas*.

Naulī is foremost of the *haṭha yoga* practices. It kindles the digestive fire, removing indigestion, sluggish digestion and all disorders of the *doshas* (bodily humours), and brings about happiness.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:33–34, HYPM pp.215, 219

The word *naulī* is of uncertain derivation, and has been variously interpreted. Because of the churning of the abdominal muscles, *naulī-karma* is also called *laulīkī* (rolling):

With great force move the stomach and intestines from one side to the other. This is called *laulīkī yoga*. It destroys all diseases and increases the bodily fire.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:52; cf. GSV p.10

5. *Trāṭaka-karma, trāṭaka-kriyā* (fixing practice) or *trāṭaka-dhyāna* (fixing contemplation). Gazing for a prolonged period at any small object in order

to increase the powers of concentration. When tears come to the eyes, they are closed until dry, and the cycle repeated several times. The object of concentration can be anything, such as a mustard seed or a black spot on a white wall, but is often the flame of a candle or small oil lamp:

Looking intently with an unwavering gaze at a small point until tears are shed, is known as *trāṭaka* by the *āchāryas* (teachers).

Trāṭaka eradicates all eye diseases, fatigue and sloth, and closes the doorway creating these problems. It should be carefully kept secret like a golden casket.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 2:31–32, *HYPM* pp.208, 212

The object or point of concentration is known as a *lakshya* (spot or mark). Other *lakshyas* commonly chosen for concentration are the tip of the nose, the midpoint between the eyebrows (the eye centre), and the crown of the head. The latter two, of course, require internal concentration.

Other variations include gazing at the rising sun, best done in winter because the strength of the summer sun will damage the eyes. The practitioner is said to gain miraculous powers, dependent upon the degree of concentration attained.

In a similar exercise, *trikuṭī-dhyāna*, the practitioner sits in *padmāsana* (lotus position) and first fixes his gaze upon the tip of his nose; then gradually taking the attention inward, he holds it at the *ājñā chakra*. The mind is held in concentration by mental repetition of a *mantra*. The practice provides training in concentration which aids in the development of mental clarity, imagination, and the consideration of mental concepts. For an ardent practitioner, it can also aid in developing inner vision (*nirat*), helping to take the soul into the astral plane. In this context, *trikuṭī* refers to the meeting of the three *nāḍīs* (currents of *prāṇa*) of *iḍā*, *pingalā* and *sushumṇā* at the centre behind the eyes.

6. *Kapāla-bhāti* (shining skull). Air is drawn in rapidly, but without force, through one nostril and out through the other. Alternatively, water is drawn in through the two nostrils and out through the mouth, or in through the mouth and out through the nostrils. This helps in the elimination of mucus problems:

By this *yoga* practice one becomes like *Kāmadeva* (deity of love). Old age never comes to him and decrepitude never disfigures him. The body becomes healthy, elastic, and mucus problems are eliminated.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 1:59–60; cf. *GSV* p.11

Other cleansing exercises are also used in *haṭha yoga*, either replacing or in addition to one or other of the above. A number of these are listed in texts such the *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* and the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā*.

The Eighty-Four Āsanas

In modern times, *āsanas* (postures) are the feature most commonly identified with *haṭha yoga*:

Prior to everything, *āsana* is spoken of as the first part of *haṭha yoga*. By the practice of *āsanas*, one gets steadiness of body and mind, diseaselessness, and flexibility of the limbs.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:17; cf. HYPM p.67

According to tradition, it is said:

There are eighty-four hundred thousand *āsanas* described by *Shiva*. The postures are as many in number as there are numbers of species of living creatures in this universe.

Among them, eighty-four are the best; and among these eighty-four, thirty-two have been found useful for mankind in this world.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 2:1–2; cf. GSV p.12

The *haṭha yoga āsanas* represent a complete system of postures designed to stretch, exercise, and tone every muscle in the body. There are standing postures and sitting postures, postures for certain ailments or bodily conditions, and so on. Generally, if there is a posture to stretch a group of muscles one way, there will be a counter-balancing posture to stretch them the other way. The postures also bear a close relationship to the system of *nāḍīs*. Particular postures energize and balance particular aspects of bodily pranic organization.

Ancient texts also recommend various postures for meditation, and although the selections may differ, two – *siddhāsana* and *padmāsana* – are invariably included:

1. *Siddhāsana* (Accomplished Posture, Posture of the Adepts)

Eighty-four *āsanas* were taught by *Shiva*. Out of these, I shall now describe the four important ones. *Siddhāsana*, *padmāsana*, *śiṃhāsana*, and *bhadrāsana*, these are the four main *āsanas*. Always sit comfortably in *siddhāsana* because it is the best.

Press the perineum with the heel of one of the feet, place the other foot on top of the genitals. Having done this, rest the chin on the chest. Remaining still and steady, with the senses controlled, gaze steadily into the eyebrow centre; it breaks open the door to liberation. This is called *siddhāsana*...

Just as moderate diet (*mitāhāra*) is the most important of the *yamas* (restraints), and non-violence (*ahiṃsā*) of the *niyamas* (observances), so the *siddhas* know that *siddhāsana* is the most important of the

āsanas. Of all the eighty-four *āsanas*, *siddhāsana* should always be practised. It purifies the 72,000 *nāḍīs*.

The *yogī* who meditates on *ātmā* (self, soul), takes moderate and pure food and practises *siddhāsana* for twelve years, attains perfection or *siddhi*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:33–36, 38–40; cf. *HYPM* pp.100–2, 109–11

2. *Padmāsana* (Lotus Posture)

Place the right foot on the left thigh and the left foot on the right thigh, cross the hands behind the back and firmly hold the toes. Press the chin against the chest and look at the tip of the nose. This is called *padmāsana*, the destroyer of a *yogī*'s diseases.

Place the feet on the thighs, soles upward, palms in the middle of the groin, facing upward.

Gaze at the nose tip, keeping the tongue pressed against the root of the upper teeth and the chin against the chest, and slowly raise the *prāṇa* upward.

This is called *padmāsana*, destroyer of all diseases. Ordinary people cannot achieve this posture, only the few wise ones on earth can.

(Sitting in *padmāsana*) keeping the palms one above the other, the chin against the chest and contemplating Him (the supreme Self) in the mind (*chitta*), repeatedly draw the *prāṇa* up from the anal region and bring the inhaled *prāṇa* downwards. (Thus, joining the two), one gets the highest knowledge by awakening the *śakti* (*kuṇḍalinī*).

The *yogī* who, seated in *padmāsana*, inhales through the entrances of the *nāḍīs*, filling them with *maruta* (*prāṇa*), gains liberation; there is no doubt about it.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:44–49; cf. *HYPM* pp.117, 123–24

Just as closing the eyes shuts off visual impressions from the outside, helping to still the mind and withdraw it from external sensations, so too *padmāsana* or the simpler cross-legged posture helps in meditation. By crossing one ankle over the other and by placing the wrists on the knees, sensation is reduced from the feet and hands, the most sensitive part of the limbs. By folding the legs up beneath the body, the attention readily withdraws to the main part of the body. Energy is thus conserved and concentration can begin. The posture also has certain health benefits. In *padmāsana*, the left leg is crossed over the right, which is the reverse of *vajraparyanka* (*vajra* posture), the traditional cross-legged pose of the Buddha, in which the right leg is crossed over the left.

3. *Shavāsana* (Corpse Posture)

A third well-known posture is worthy of mention alongside *siddhāsana* and *padmāsana*:

Lying flat on the ground with the face upwards, in the manner of a dead body, is *shavāsana*. It removes tiredness, and enables the mind (and whole body) to relax.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:32, HYPM p.98

Shavāsana usually concludes a session. The practitioner lies on his back on the floor, completely relaxed, with the eyes shut. This posture is also used in some meditational practices in which the attention is concentrated at the eye centre with the repetition of a *mantra* such as *so'ham* (I am That) or *aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman).

Mudrās

The *mudrās* of *haṭha yoga* cover a variety of exercises, some seemingly bizarre. In the *mātangiṇī* (elephant) *mudrā*, for example, the yogi stands up to his neck in water. He breathes in water through the nose and ejects it through the mouth. This is said to give him the strength of an elephant. A number of the *mudrās* are a central part of practices involved with awakening of the *kuṇḍalinī*, the opening of the *chakras*, and the raising of the *prāṇa* through the central *nāḍī* of *sushumṇā*. The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* lists twenty-five *mudrās*, including a group of *mudrās* known as *bandhas*. Of their efficacy, it says:

These *mudrās*, which give happiness and emancipation, should be taught to a guileless, calm and peaceful-minded person, who is devoted to his *guru* and comes of good family.

These *mudrās* destroy all diseases. They increase the gastric fire of he who practises them daily.

To him death never comes, nor decay, *etc.*; there is no fear to him from fire and water, nor from air.

Cough, asthma, enlargement of spleen, leprosy, being diseases of twenty sorts, are verily destroyed by the practice of these *mudrās*.

O Chaṇḍa! What more can I tell you? In short, there is nothing in this world like the *mudrās* for giving quick success.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:96–100; cf. GSV p.35

The *Shiva Saṃhitā* says:

Out of the many *mudrās*, the following ten are the best: *mahāmudrā*, *mahābandha*, *mahāvedha*, *khecharī*, *jālandhara*, *mūla-bandha*, *viparīta-karaṇī*, *uḍḍāna*, *vajrolī*, and *shakti-chālana*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 4:15, SSV p.44

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* gives the same list,⁶ two of which are described here:

1. Mahāmudrā (Great Mudrā)

My dearest, I shall now describe to you the *mahāmudrā*, from whose knowledge the ancient sages, Kapila and others, obtained success in *yoga*.

In accordance with the instructions of the *guru*, press gently the perineum with the heel of the left foot. Stretching the right foot out, hold it fast by the two hands. Having closed the nine gates of the body (withdrawn attention from the eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, genitals, and anus), place the chin on the chest. Then concentrate the vibrations of the mind and inspire air and retain it by *kumbhaka* (as long as one can). This is the *mahāmudrā*, held secret in all the *tantras*. The steady-minded *yogī*, having practised it on the left side, should then practise it on the right side, and in all cases must be firm in *prāṇāyāma*.

In this way, even the most unfortunate *yogī* might obtain success. By this means all the vessels (*nāḍīs*) of the body are roused and stirred into activity; the life is increased and its decay checked, and all sins are destroyed. All diseases are healed, and the gastric fire is increased. It gives faultless beauty to the body, and destroys decay and death. All fruits of desires and pleasures are obtained, and the senses are conquered. The *yogī* fixed in meditation acquires all the above-mentioned things, through practice. There should be no hesitation in doing so.

Shiva Saṃhitā 4:16–18, SSV pp.44–45

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* also explains that the *mahāmudrā* is used in awakening the *kuṇḍalinī*.

By locking the throat and retaining the breath, the *prāṇa* rises straight, just like a snake beaten with a stick becomes straight.

So *kuṇḍalinī shakti* becomes straight at once. Then the two (*idā* and *pingalā*) become lifeless as the *shakti* enters *sushumṇā*.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:11–12, HYPM p.291

2. Khecharī-mudrā (Moving-in-space Mudrā)

Of all the *mudrās*, to a Western mind, *khecharī* must seem the most bizarre. Even so, it is esteemed very highly in all the literature on the subject. As a preliminary to this *mudrā*, the tendon that holds the tongue to the floor of the mouth (*frenulum linguae*) is slowly cut through (over a lengthy period of time). At the same time, the tongue is elongated using an iron implement. The idea is to be able to pass the tongue up inside the sinus passages and even to touch the place between the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*). The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* instructs:

Cut down the lower tendon of the tongue, and move the tongue constantly: rub it with fresh butter, and draw it out (to lengthen it) with an iron instrument.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:25, GSV p.24

The translator of this text comments:

This is the preliminary to *khecharī-mudrā*. Its object is to lengthen the tongue so that when drawn out it may touch with its tip the space between the eyebrows. This can be done by cutting away the lower tendon. It takes about three years to cut away the whole tendon. I saw my *guru* doing it in this wise. On every Monday he used to cut the tendon one-twelfth of an inch deep, and sprinkle salt over it so that the cut portions might not join together. Then, rubbing the tongue with butter, he used to pull it out. Peculiar iron instruments are employed for this purpose; the painful process is repeated every week till the tongue can be stretched out to the requisite length.

S.C. Vasu, Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā, GSV p.24

The text continues:

By constantly practising this, the tongue becomes long, and when it reaches the space between the two eyebrows, then the *khecharī* is accomplished.

Then (the tongue being lengthened), practise turning it upwards and backwards so as to touch the palate, till at length it reaches the holes of the nostrils opening into the mouth. Close those holes with the tongue (thus stopping inspiration), and fix the gaze between the middle of the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-madhye*). This is called *khecharī*.

By this practice there is neither fainting, nor hunger, nor thirst, nor laziness. There comes neither disease, nor decay, nor death. The body becomes divine.

The body cannot be burned by fire, nor dried up by the air, nor wetted by water, nor bitten by snakes.

The body becomes beautiful; *samādhi* is verily attained, and the tongue touching the holes obtains various juices (it drinks nectar).

Various juices being produced, day by day the man experiences new sensations; first, he experiences a saltish taste, then alkaline, then bitter, then astringent, then he feels the taste of butter, then of ghee, then of milk, then of curd, then of whey, then of honey, then of palm juice, and lastly, arises the taste of nectar.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:26–32; cf. GSV pp.24–25

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* explains the same process, also adding:

Khecharī-mudrā is turning the tongue backwards into the cranial cavity and focusing the gaze between the eyebrows (*bhruvoḥ-antagam*)...

When the tongue constantly presses the cavity, the moon's nectar (flows and) has a saline, pungent, and acidic flavour. It is like milk, ghee, honey. Fatal diseases, old age and weapons are warded off. From that, immortality and the eight *siddhis* (powers) manifest.

Fluid drips into the sixteen petalled lotus (*i.e. vishuddhi chakra*, throat centre) when the tongue is inserted into the upper throat cavity; the *parama-shakti* (*i.e. kuṇḍalinī*) is released and one becomes absorbed in that. The *yogī* who drinks the pure stream of nectar is freed from disease, has longevity, and has a body as soft and as beautiful as a lotus stem.

The nectar is secreted from the topmost part of the Meru (*i.e. sushumṇā*), the fountainhead of the *nāḍīs*. He who has pure intellect can know the Truth therein. The nectar, which is the essence of the body, flows out from the moon, and hence death ensues. Therefore *khecharī-mudrā* should be practised, otherwise perfection of the body cannot be attained.

Five *nāḍīs* convene in this cavity and it is the source of knowledge. *Khecharī* should be established in that void, untainted (by ignorance).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:32, 50–53; cf. *HYPM* pp.310, 324–25, 328–29

The Bandhas

The *bandhas* are a particular kind of *mudrā*. Literally, *bandha* means closed, locked, restrained, bonded, contracted, knotted. In *haṭha yoga*, *bandhas* are 'knots', 'locks' or contractions of internal muscles such as the diaphragm, the abdominal muscles, the throat, and so on. Like all the exercises of *haṭha yoga*, their purpose is to gain control over the subtle physical energies or *prāṇa*, and be able to regulate the functioning of the inner bodily organs. Just as capacitors, resistors, relays and so on control the flow of electricity, so do *bandhas* regulate the flow of *prāṇa*.

A number of *bandhas* are commonly described, including *mahābandha*, *mūla-bandha*, *jālandhara-bandha*, and *uḍḍiyāna-bandha*. *Uḍḍiyāna-bandha* (flying up), for example, is described as:

Contract the bowels equally above and below the navel, towards the back, so that the abdominal viscera may touch the spine. He who practises this *uḍḍiyāna*, without ceasing, conquers death. The great bird (*kuṇḍalinī*), by this process, is instantly forced up into the *sushumṇā*, and thereafter only flies therein.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:10; cf. *GSV* p.21

And the *jālandhara-bandha*:

Contracting the throat by bringing the chin to the chest is the *bandha* called *jālandhara*...

That is *jālandhara-bandha* which catches the flow of nectar in the throat. It eliminates throat ailments. Having done *jālandhara-bandha* by contracting the throat, the nectar does not fall into the gastric fire and the *vāyu* (i.e. *prāṇa*) is not agitated.

By firmly contracting the throat, the two *nāḍīs* (i.e. *idā* and *pingalā*) are paralysed, and the sixteen *ādhāras* (supports, aspects) of the middle *chakra* are locked.

By contracting the perineum, performing *uḍḍiyāna* and locking *idā* and *pingalā* (with *jālandhara*), *sushumṇā* becomes active. By this means the *prāṇa* and breath become still.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:70–75; cf. *HYPM* pp.352, 354, 356, 359

The *mahābandha* (great contraction) is also described:

Press the heel of the left foot in the perineum and place the right foot on the left thigh. Breathing in, bring the chin to the chest (i.e. *jālandhara-bandha*), contract the perineal region (i.e. *mūla-bandha*), and concentrate the mind on the central *nāḍī* (i.e. *sushumṇā*).

Having retained the breath for as long as comfortable, exhale slowly. Having completed the practice on the left side, practise again on the right side.

Some are of the opinion that the chin lock (i.e. *jālandhara-bandha*) is unnecessary, and it is sufficient to keep the tongue against the front teeth.

This (*mahābandha*) stops the upward movement of energy in the *nāḍīs*. Truly, *mahābandha* is the bestower of great *siddhis* (powers).

Mahābandha frees one from the bonds of death, makes the three *nāḍīs* unite in the space between the eyebrows.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 3:19–24; cf. *HYPM* pp.298, 302

The health benefits of these muscular contractions are not without credence even in the light of modern medicine. Bringing the chin onto the chest in *jālandhara-bandha* will effect the functioning of the thyroid and parathyroid glands in the throat through which the metabolism of the entire body is regulated. The throat *chakra*, with its sixteen ‘petals’ or functional aspects, has a direct association with this endocrine centre. What modern medicine has discovered from the external, sensory point of view, the yogis of old discovered through their subtle inner perception of the *prāṇas* functioning in that area. There is naturally a difference in the two ways of expression, but they are both trying to describe the same reality.

Likewise, the *mūla-bandha*, which is essentially a contraction of the pelvic floor muscles of the perineum, has various health benefits. Proper tone of these muscles is necessary, for instance, for maintaining good posture, for control of the bowel and bladder, and in singing.

Each of the *chakras* has an associated endocrine gland. The body is also a two-way energy system, the gross affects the subtle and the subtle affects the gross. It seems that the yogis, through their own inner perception of the way the *prāṇas* function in the body, also devised muscular contractions that massaged or in some other way affected the functioning of both the *chakras* and these glands.

The Five Dhāraṇās

The mind is disturbed by the subtle aspects of the five senses (*indriyas*). Each *indriya* is related to one of the five *tattvas* (conditions of matter). Therefore, in order to achieve peace of mind and concentration, the mind has to be detached from its involvement with the *indriyas* and the *tattvas*.

Each *tattva* is also associated with one of the *chakras* of the physical body. In order to gain control over these *tattvas*, some yogis have adopted the technique of blocking or holding the flow of the *prāṇa* at each of the *chakras*, successively. This entails learning to hold the concentration at that centre for some period of time. They thereby conquer or obtain control over each of the five *tattvas* that agitate the five senses. This holding of the concentration is known as *dhāraṇā* (holding, retaining, concentration). In this context, the attention is held or concentrated at each individual centre.

For example, if *prāṇas* can be held by concentration at the rectal centre for two hours or so, then the earth *tattva* is conquered. This *dhāraṇā* is called *thāmanā* (holding, restraining). Likewise, there are *dhāraṇās* to conquer each of the other *tattvas* of water, fire, air and *ākāsha*, called respectively *drāvaṇa* (fluid-like), *dahanī* (fiery), *bhrāmaṇī* (whirlwind-like), and *shankhanī* (conch-like) *dhāraṇā*. They are also called *pārthivī* (earthy), *āmbhasī* (watery), *vāyavī* (airy), *āgneyī* (fiery), and *ākāshī* (ethereal).⁷ Why *bhrāmaṇī* (whirlwind; from *bhrāmaṇa*, circulating) is used in this context is uncertain, although ‘whirlwind’ has an obvious association with air.

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* recommends concentration at each of the five *chakras* below the eye centre for “five *ghaṭikās*” (two hours), each description repeating the others. For the fire *tattva*, the text reads:

The *agni* (fire) *tattva* is situated at the navel (*chakra*), its colour is red like the *indra-gopa* insect; its form is triangular; its *bīja* (seed *mantra*) is the syllable *ra*; its presiding deity is *Rudra*. It is refulgent like the sun, and the giver of success. Hold the *prāṇa* along with the *chitta* (mind) in this *tattva* for five *ghaṭikās*. This is called *āgneyī dhāraṇā*, destroyer of the fear of dreadful death, and fire cannot injure him.

Even if the practitioner were thrown into burning fire, by virtue of the *mudrā* he would remain alive, without fear of death.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 3:75–76; cf. *GSV* pp.31–32

Conclusion

Haṭha yoga, like all spiritual disciplines, is a path of practice. As the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* points out:

Whether young or old, very old, sick or feeble, one can attain perfection in all the *yogas* by practice.

Success (*siddhi*) results from practical application. Without practice how can it happen? Just by reading the *śāstras* success (*siddhi*) in *yoga* can never be attained.

It is not by wearing the garb of a *siddha*, nor by talking about it, but only by practical application that one becomes a *siddha*. Without doubt, this is the truth.

Āsanas, various types of *kumbhaka* (breath retention) and the efficacious *mudrās* should all be practised in the *haṭha yoga* system until success in *rāja yoga* is attained.

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:64–67; cf. *HYPM* pp.143, 145

Of *haṭha yoga*'s many and various practices, one in each category is singled out by the *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* as the best:

There is no *āsana* like *siddhāsana*, no *kumbhaka* like *kevala*, no *mudrā* like *khecharī*, and no *laya* (absorption) of mind like *nāda* (the inner sound).

Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā 1:43; cf. *HYPM* p.116

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**, **kuṇḍalinī yoga**, **prāṇāyāma**, **rāja yoga**.

1. Many of these *āsanas*, *karmas*, *dhautis*, *mudrās*, *bandhas* and so on are described, with photographic illustrations, on the internet.
2. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:38, *HYPM* p.109.
3. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 1:40.
4. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 1:13–44.
5. See also *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 1:50.
6. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 3:6–7, *HYPM* p.287.
7. *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* 3:69–81, *GSV* pp.30–33.

hazkarat shemot (He) *Lit.* remembrance (*hazkarat*) of names (*shemot*); Jewish meditational practices involving the repetition of written or spoken attributive

names of God, in order to achieve concentration and pass through the inner spiritual stages, ultimately to achieve union with the supreme Being by becoming receptive to the divine outpouring (*shefa*), drawing it into one's own being.

The practice of *hazkarat shemot* was taught in sixteenth-century northern Israel by Isaac Luria of Safed and his disciple Ḥayyim Vital. It involved combining and transposing the letters of names of God, angels or biblical passages, repeating them numerous times. Through the concentration developed, practitioners would experience a degree of detachment from the body, have visions of inner light, and experience feelings of bliss and attachment to the Divine. These repetitions formed part of the kabbalistic practices of *yihudim* (unifications) and *kavanot* (concentration exercises).

In his *Derekh ha-Shem* ('Path of the Name'), the eighteenth-century kabbalist and ethicist Rabbi Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto wrote of the significance of meditation on the names, and their influence on both the practitioner and the entire creation. He believed that by this means the divine will and illumination would be transmitted to the practitioner:

God also decreed and ordained that when an individual utters His name, divine illumination and influence are bestowed upon him. This is what God meant when He said, "In every place where I allow My name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you."¹

When a particular name of God is uttered and used to call upon Him, it results in the emanation of an influence (*hashpa'ah*) associated with that name, . . . by virtue of its mystery (its hidden nature).

When a particular influence is transmitted, it will necessarily give rise to the results specified for it. Its particular effects will then spread through the entire hierarchy of creation, from the beginning to the end.

This entire process, however, is circumscribed by the highest wisdom. God thus decreed that a name should only transmit an influence and have an effect when uttered under specific conditions in a defined manner. Otherwise, it will have no effect at all. . . .

God decreed that inspiration and prophecy should be attained in this manner, through the names associated with God with respect to these influences. An individual attains this when he repeats these names mentally, utters them verbally, or combines them with other words, and at the same time fulfils all the other necessary conditions. . . .

This method, involving the transmission of God's influences through His names, can only be used by an individual who has attained a high degree of nearness and attachment to God. The greater this degree of nearness, the more successful he will be in making use of this method.

Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto, *Derekh ha-Shem* 3:2, 5–7; cf. in *MBAK* pp.85–86

See also: **hashba'ot, kavanot, yihudim.**

1. *Exodus* 20:21.

heavenly reasoning See **logismos.**

heikan (J) *Lit.* closing the gate, closing the door; an aspect of *zazen* Buddhist meditation practice that consists of ‘closing the gate’ of distractions, which lead the attention outwards, by means of inward concentration and an eagerness for enlightenment; an attitude of awareness of external things without involvement in them.

Heikan means that the meditator is in control of his mind and senses and is able to direct his attention at will, undistracted by the environment and awareness of all that is happening. It does not mean that he has no interaction with the external world. This state of mind is conveyed in a poem by the Chinese poet Táo Yuānmíng (365–427) (*aka.* Táo Qián), often quoted in *Zen* circles, which begins:

My hut is built in the midst of human habitation,
yet I hear no sound of horse and cart.

How, you ask, can that be possible?

A detached heart (*xīn*) is naturally secluded.

Táo Yuānmíng, “Yīnjiǔ”, in TYSJ; cf. in CDBZ p.84, HSCP p.111

hekhalot (He) (sg. *hekhal*) *Lit.* palaces; a term used to identify Jewish mystics and their writings – mainly of the talmudic (C2nd–6th) and early part of the Geonic (589–1038) period in Israel and Babylonia – that are characterized by the quest for mystic transport through seven spiritual realms or heavens (*shamayyim*), the seventh and highest of which is further subdivided into seven halls or palaces (*hekhalot*).

As the soul ascends to God, it first passes through the seven heavens, and then – in the seventh heaven – ascends from one palace to the next, finally entering the highest or seventh palace – that of the divine throne – where it contemplates the divine Being Himself. *Hekhalot* is derived from the biblical term *hekhal*, meaning ‘temple’ or ‘innermost sanctuary’, which refers metaphorically to the eternal abode of God. The seventh heaven was known as *hekhal ha-Melekh* (the palace of the King) or *hekhal ha-kodesh* (the holy sanctuary).

The considerable body of *Hekhalot* literature recounts stories concerning mystics and mythical figures who ascended through the seven heavens to reach the seventh palace or hall (*hekhal*) that is in the seventh heaven.

Whether these stories describe actual inner experiences or are fictional works of a mystically inspired imagination is unknown. The literature probably represents a mixture of both.

Among the most significant of these texts is the very early *Hekhalot Zutarti* ('The Lesser *Hekhalot*'), which describes the supposed inner journey of Rabbi Akiva (c.50–135 CE), credited with being one of the rare and blessed ones to have completed the mystic ascent and seen the divine Being. It also relates a story told in the *Talmud* of four sages who enter *pardes* (the garden or king's orchard, the inner regions).¹

According to the description of Rabbi Akiva's ascent, each celestial palace has a gate, guarded by an archangel. In order to enter, the soul of the devotee has to overcome the opposition of these guardians. The devotee must be familiar with the names of the angels, which gives him power over them. He is also equipped with special 'seals' or divine names, which constitute permission to proceed. He has to undergo several tests in order finally to be able to see the 'King in His beauty'. Much of the *Hekhalot Zutarti* is concerned with the dangers of the inner spiritual path and how to overcome them.

The *Hekhalot Rabbati* ('The Greater *Hekhalot*') concerns ten legendary martyrs, but focuses mainly on the inner journey of the legendary Rabbi Ishmael, who is called a 'high priest'. It describes the inner palaces through which the rabbi ascends, his methods for achieving mystical ascent, and the hymns he hears sung by the angels during his journey. The work also describes the late first-century Rabbi Nehuniah, author of the early kabbalistic work the *Sefer ha-Bahir* ('Book of Illumination'), as being in a state of mystic transport, his body lying lifeless and his soul traversing the celestial realms.

The *Ma'aseh Merkavah* ('Events of the Chariot'), which refers to the biblical prophet Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot, consists of the hymns and songs heard or recited by the mystics during their inner ascent to the seventh palace.

Those who entered the king's palace and enjoyed his glory were called *benei hekhal* (sons of the palace) or *yorday ha-merkavah* (those who descended into the chariot). The designation of descent rather than ascent for the spiritual journey (although the descriptions are of an ascent) is often attributed to a passage in the biblical *Song of Songs*: "I descended to the garden of nuts to see the fruit of the valley and to see whether the vine had blossomed, whether the pomegranates were in flower."² The verse is given a mystical interpretation: the mystic went within himself and experienced inner spiritual visions. The fruits and flowers are symbols of lights, colours, and levels of spiritual revelation.

There are parallels between the *Hekhalot* literature and the gnosticism of early Christian times. Many scholars believe that the *Hekhalot* mystics were active even earlier than the first century CE, and that they may have been antecedents of the early gnostics. It is certainly true that these groups of mystics

and gnostics were part of a significant interest in mysticism in the Middle East that flourished from around 200 BCE (if not earlier) to around 350 CE.

Hekhalot mysticism existed alongside the other well-known mystical tradition of the times – *Merkavah* mysticism. Both flourished concurrently with the development of the legal systems of Judaism – the *Mishnah* and *Talmud* – in the lands of Israel and Babylonia, through to the fifth century CE. The *Merkavah* mystical tradition continued among the schools of the *Geonim* (sages) that flourished through to the eleventh century in Babylonia. Often the rabbis who constituted the religious leadership of the community, and were involved in the legal codification of Judaism, were also those engaged in mystical practices. Hai Gaon, who lived in Babylonia in the tenth and eleventh centuries, describes the use of certain techniques to attain mystical vision of the inner palaces or halls:

You may perhaps know that many of the sages hold that when a man is worthy and blessed with certain qualities, and he wishes to gaze at the heavenly chariot (*merkavah*) and the halls (*hekhalot*) of the angels on high, he must follow certain exercises. He must fast for a specified number of days; he must place his head between his knees, at the same time whispering softly to himself certain praises of God, with his face towards the ground. As a result, he will gaze into the innermost recesses of his own heart, and it will seem as if he saw the seven halls (*hekhalot*) with his own eyes, moving from hall to hall (*hekhal*) to observe that which is to be found therein.

Hai Gaon in Ozar ha-Geonim, OGL4 pp.13–15; cf. in SBJT p.32

During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, following the flourishing of *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* mysticism in Israel and Babylonia, the development of the Kabbalah in northern Spain and Provence in southern France saw the centre of Jewish mysticism shift to Europe. At the same time, the devotional movement *Hasidei Ashkenaz* also came into existence in Germany. The writings of both the kabbalists and the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* were influenced by the imagery and terminology of the *Hekhalot* and *Merkavah*. The same period also saw the rise of Spanish Sufism, the European Cathars, and other mystically oriented groups.

The primary kabbalistic work, the thirteenth-century *Zohar*, contains numerous passages describing the creation as the descent and continuous flow of the divine emanation through the various realms into the lower levels of the creation. It also describes the inner journey of the devotee through various *hekhalot* – palaces, halls, and gates. The gates to each of the palaces must be entered in order to gain knowledge of the Godhead:

Rabbi Simeon rose and said: ... “There are seven sacred halls (*hekhalot*), and they all have portals, and the prayer of unification enters each one

of them. Whoever knows how to please his Master, and to declare His unity in perfection, knows how to enter all of them and bind bonds together, spirit with spirit, the lower spirit with the upper spirit.”

Zohar 1:41a, WZ2 p.597

The *Zohar* continues with a description of the brilliance and light of each of the seven halls. Naming the seven halls in terminology similar to that of the earlier *Hekhalot* mystics, it combines its concept of the *sefirot* (emanations of divine qualities) with that of the *hekhalot*. According to the *Zohar*, the *hekhalot* act as a bridge between the realm of the *sefirot* and the lower realms of matter. The highest *hekhal* is called *kodesh ha-kodashim* (holy of holies) and corresponds to the third *sefirah* of *Binah* (Understanding).

See also: **merkavah**, **sulam ha-‘aliyah** (►4).

1. *Babylonian Talmud, Mishnah Hagigah* 14b.
2. *Song of Songs* 6:11.

hesychasm A monastic way of life favoured by the Eastern Orthodox Church, in which the monk seeks inner stillness (Gk. *hēsychia*) through ceaseless prayer; revived by the monks of Mount Athos during the thirteenth century, based on practices dating back to the early desert fathers.

See also: **hesychast** (7.1), **hēsychia** (8.1), **solitary life**.

hitbodedut (He) *Lit.* seclusion, self-isolation; meditation; from *badad* (secluded); implies both physical isolation from worldly life and internal isolation of consciousness from the external world by attachment to the Divine through meditation.

Hitbodedut was first used as a term for meditation during medieval times, when it was associated with the spiritual revelations of the biblical prophets. The fourteenth-century Rabbi Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), for instance, wrote that the attainment of prophetic revelation “requires the isolation (*hitbodedut*) of the consciousness from the imagination, or both of these from the other perceptive mental faculties”.¹ The practice of *hitbodedut* was also associated with the inner path of the earlier *Merkavah* (chariot) mystics, whose inner journey was described as an ascent (or descent) in a chariot, and who are said to have entered the divine orchard, *pardes* – a metaphor for the realms of higher consciousness. Aryeh Kaplan, whose studies of Jewish meditation reveal a long tradition of inner spirituality, mentioned in the Bible by various terms, says that *hitbodedut* meditation implies a “kind of internal isolation, where the individual mentally isolates his essence from his thoughts”.²

Contemporary scholars trace the use of *hitbodedut* for meditation practices to a time when there was a distinct Sufi influence on Jewish mysticism in the coastal and highland areas of northern Israel and the Jewish communities in Egypt. In his *Guide of the Perplexed*, the Arabic-speaking Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), who was born in Spain but lived in Egypt, describes *hitbodedut* as the worship of God that will lead to knowledge of Him. He also explains systematically how a person should undertake *hitbodedut* meditation. Although he is known to the world primarily as a rationalist and philosopher, it has been demonstrated in recent years that Maimonides was also influenced by Sufi teachings.³ Discussing a well-known passage from *Deuteronomy*, he writes of focusing the attention upon the divine Intelligence or Consciousness – the divine outpouring and creative power that sustains creation, *Hitbodedut*, he says, is the physical seclusion that helps in “uniting with” and “merging” into this power:

“To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”⁴ Now we have made it clear several times that the love of God is proportionate to one’s apprehension (*hasagah*) of Him. After love comes this worship to which attention has also been drawn by the sages, may their memory be blessed, who said: “This is the worship of the heart.” In my opinion, it consists in concentrating one’s mind on the Primal Intelligence (*Muskal ha-Rishon*), uniting with it (*hityahadut*) according to one’s capacity. . . . It has thus been demonstrated that one’s aim, after having attained awareness (*sikhliyut*) of God, should be to give oneself over to Him and let one’s consciousness yearn for Him at all times. In most cases, this is accomplished through seclusion (*hitbodedut*) and merging (*hityahadut*). Every pious individual should therefore seclude himself (*le-hitboded*), not associating with others except when absolutely necessary.

Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51, MNMK fol.125b;
cf. GPM2 p.386, GPM2 p.621

Maimonides reinforces this view when he maintains that physical seclusion and reduction of external activities is required for continuous devotion to God:

The Consciousness (*Sekhel*) that flows from God unto us is the bond that joins us to Him. You have it in your power to strengthen that bond, if you choose to do so, or to weaken it gradually, until it breaks if you prefer to do that. It will only become strong when you employ it in the love of God, and seek that love: it will be weakened when you direct your thoughts to other things. You must know that even if you were the wisest man in respect of the divine science, you would break the link between yourself and God were you to empty your thought of God and busy yourself entirely in eating necessary food or occupying yourself

with other necessary business; for at that time you are not with God, and He is not with you; for that relation between yourself and Him is actually interrupted in those moments. The pious were therefore particular to restrict the time in which they could not attend to Him and were turned away from Him by other occupations, and cautioned others about it, saying, "Let not God be absent from your thought." As David says, "I have set the Lord always before me; because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved."⁵ That is to say: I do not turn my thought away from God; He is like my right hand, from which, on account of the facility with which it moves, my attention is not distracted even for a moment, and therefore I shall not be moved – that is, I shall not fall.

*Moses Maimonides, Guide of the Perplexed 3:51, MNMK fol.125b;
cf. GPM 386, GPM2 pp.621–22*

In an explanation of his father's *Guide of the Perplexed*, Abraham Maimonides (1186–1237) writes that there are two types of *hitbodedut*, external and internal. The external is physical seclusion; and the internal consists of isolating the soul from the intellectual faculty of the mind. When the mind is completely hushed in this manner, one is able to perceive the spiritual realm.⁶

Abraham Abulafia (1240–1291), who was also born in Spain and travelled in the Mediterranean region, lived for some time in Israel before returning to Europe. In Akko, in northern Israel, he came in touch with Sufi practices such as *khalwah bāṭinah* (inner seclusion), and the Sufi method of letter combination, with which he was probably already familiar through the teachings of earlier generations of Jewish mystics such as the *Ḥasidei Ashkenaz* (German pietists). Although it is unknown whether Abulafia had direct contact with Sufis, scholars who have traced the mutual influences of Sufi and Jewish spiritual practices believe that the *hitbodedut* practised by Abulafia and his disciples is probably an adaptation of the Muslim *khalwah*.⁷ It is also thought that *hitbodedut* may be related to the Sufi term *tafrīd* (seclusion, detachment from self), which is used in a similar manner in some kabbalistic texts.⁸ Abulafia's use of the term *hitbodedut* also has some parallels to the Sufi practice of *dhikr* (remembrance, recitation, meditation).

The aim of the practice was to attain the state of prophecy, understood as a state of spiritually elevated consciousness. In this context, *hitbodedut* was used to mean 'concentration', referring to a meditational technique that cultivated detachment from the dualities of the physical world and sought a disciplined control of the emotions in order to attain a state of equanimity (*hishtavut*). Abulafia writes that this technique or path of concentration (*derekh hitbodedut*), as it became known, involves focused concentration and repetition of the transposed and recombined letters of the names of God, angels, and biblical passages. From contemporary studies of Abulafia's meditation techniques, it appears that he was the first kabbalist to

associate the term *hitbodedut* with a practical and safe system of meditation using letter combination and the recitation of divine names. In one of his letters, he says:

This path is the beginning of the wisdom of letter combination in general, and is only fitting to those who fear God and take heed of His name. And the sixth path ... is suitable to those who practise concentration (*hitbodedut*), who wish to approach God, in a closeness such that His activity – may He be blessed – will be known to them within themselves.

Abraham Abulafia, Sheva' Netivot ha-Torah; cf. in SEKI p.109

“Letter combination” refers to various practices in which names of God or angels, or significant passages from the Bible are deconstructed into their individual words and letters. These are then transposed, combined, or otherwise manipulated in a process Abulafia called *zeruf* (smelting), creating multitudinous gibberish or nonsense syllables that are continuously repeated either internally or audibly, until the mind becomes detached from the meaning of the original words, empty of all thoughts, and internally absorbed in God.

Many Jewish mystics in Israel were influenced by Abulafia. The anonymous author of *Sha'arei Zedek* (‘Gates of Righteousness’), believed to have been a disciple of Abulafia’s, wrote of inner experiences of light and the divine ‘Speech’ as a result of practising *hitbodedut* and the repetition of letter combinations.⁹

In Spain, however, Abulafia’s teachings concerning *zeruf* were not readily accepted. Nevertheless, the general concept of *hitbodedut* (both as physical and mental seclusion) does appear in the writings of Jewish mystics as essential for attaining the level of prophecy. It is evident that *hitbodedut* was a term commonly used to describe the practice of withdrawing the attention from the senses and becoming alive to the spiritual reality within. *Hitbodedut* is also linked to the attainment of *devekut* (cleaving, intense attachment to God).

Recent studies of Rabbi Isaac of Akko (1250–1340), who would have been aware of Abulafia’s teachings, also reveal a strong Sufi influence. In his *Me'irat Einayim* (‘Light of the Eyes’), he specifically advocates the practice of *hitbodedut* meditation, as part of a progression towards contact with the holy spirit and the level of prophecy:

He who has merited the secret of attachment (to the Divine) will merit the secret of equanimity (*hishtavut*). And if he merits the secret of equanimity, he will merit the secret of *hitbodedut*. Once he has merited the secret of *hitbodedut*, then he will merit the holy spirit, and from that he will reach prophecy, until he prophesies and foretells future events.

Isaac of Akko, Me'irat Einayim, MEIA p.218, in LBDF p.256

Isaac taught that through *hitbodedut* one could not only attach the soul to God, one could also draw down the divine abundance into the human soul:

When man separates himself from the objects of sensation, and concentrates (*mitboded*) and removes all the powers of his spiritual soul from them, but gives them a powerful elevation in order to perceive Divinity, his thoughts shall draw down the abundance from above and it shall come to reside in his soul.

Isaac of Akko, in OCIA p.66; cf. in SEKI pp.118–19

In *Baddei ha-Aron u-Migdal Hananel* ('Vestments of the Ark and the Tower of Hananel'), Rabbi Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Gaon (c.1283–1330), a Spanish kabbalist who settled in Safed in northern Israel and was familiar with the works of Isaac of Akko and Abulafia, writes of inner experiences during the practice of *hitbodedut*:

He should concentrate his mind (*mitboded*) until he hates this world and desires the world to come. And he should not be surprised that they (the sages) said that one who is engaged in the secrets of the chariot (*merkavah*) need not stand up in the presence of a great man or an elder. . . . And he will see that there is no end to his spiritual awareness, and he shall delve deeply into the secrets of the chariot and the structures of creation, to the place where the mouth is unable to speak and the ear is unable to hear. Then he will see visions of God, as one who dreams and whose eyes are shut, as it is written, "I am asleep but my heart is awake, the voice of my beloved knocks."¹⁰ And when he opens his eyes, and even more so if another person speaks to him, he will choose death over life; for it will seem to him that he has died, for he has forgotten what he saw. Then he will look into his mind as one looks at a book in which are written these great wonders.

Shem Tov ibn Gaon, Baddei ha-Aron, BAST fol.45a; cf. in SEKI p.119

Here, it is clear that *hitbodedut* describes a state of internal isolation and concentration that is akin to death, for he has withdrawn his attention from and has effectively died to the world. Although he does not spell it out, it is probable that "the secrets of the chariot" to which he refers are *zeruf* practices.

In *Pardes Rimmonim* ('Orchard of Pomegranates'), Moses Cordovero (1522–1570), one of the later Safed kabbalists, writes of using the techniques of letter combination associated with *hitbodedut* to hear the 'divine Voice':

Several of the early ones explained that by the combination and permutation of the seventy-two-letter holy name or the other names, after great concentration (*hitbodedut*), the righteous man, who is worthy

and enlightened (*maskil*) in such matters, will have a portion of the divine Voice (*bat Kol*) revealed to him, in the sense of, “The spirit of God spoke in me, and His word was on my lips.”¹¹

*Moses Cordovero, Pardes Rimmonim 30:3.2,
PRC fol.69b; cf. in HEMI p.69, SEKI p.128*

Following Cordovero and the sixteenth-century flowering of mysticism in Safed, the notion of *hitbodedut* and the Sufi outlook in general seem to have penetrated the Kabbalah. Like Isaac of Akko, many of the mystics of this later period linked the practice of *hitbodedut* to the state of *hishtavut* (equanimity).

The same refrain of *hitbodedut* as both inner and outer seclusion is found in manuals of behaviour, such as the *Sefer Haredim* (‘Book of Moral Duties’) of Rabbi Eleazar Azikri (1533–1600). Rabbi Eleazar wrote “that a scholar who devotes his life to the *Torah* should refrain from tormenting himself (*i.e.* by ascetic practice), but instead, ‘should withdraw from the company of the people once a week to be alone with God, binding his thought to Him as if he were standing before him on the Day of Judgment’”.¹²

The *hasidim* of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also used *hitbodedut* to mean meditation. For some, the term was used for the cultivation of physical solitude in order to commune with God. For others, it implied drawing closer to the divine presence through prayer and meditation. Rabbi Dov Baer (the Maggid of Mezherich) writes that his master, the Ba’al Shem Tov (1698–1760), advised:

In your mind, constantly meditate (*hitboded*) on the divine presence. Have no thought in your mind other than your love, seeking that (the divine presence) should bind itself to you. Constantly repeat in your mind, “When will I be worthy for the light of the divine presence to dwell with me?”

Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezherich, Likkutim Yekarim 38, LYDB, in MKAK pp.274–75

Rabbi Naḥman of Bratslav (1772–1810) also advised the practice of *hitbodedut* through repetition of a phrase such as *Ribbono shel ‘olam* (‘Lord of the universe’), or through personal prayer to God in order to come closer to Him:

Set aside time each day to meditate and pray alone in a room or some meadow and express your innermost thoughts and feelings and personal prayers to God. Use every kind of appeal and argument. Use words that will endear you to God and win His favour. Plead with God to draw you closer and let you truly serve Him. This is *hitbodedut*. . .

You should tell God everything you feel, be it contrition and longing to repent over the past or requests and supplications to come truly close to God from now on, each person according to his level.

Be very careful to get into the habit of spending time every day on your personal prayers and meditation. Fix a regular time for this and then be happy for the rest of the day!

Hitbodedut is of the greatest value. It is the way to come closer to God, because it includes everything else. No matter what you lack in your service of God, even if you feel totally remote from His service, tell God everything and ask Him for all that you need.

If at times you find yourself unable to speak to God or even open your mouth, the very fact that you are there before Him wanting and yearning to speak is itself very good. You can even turn your very inability to speak into a prayer. Tell God that you feel so far away that you cannot even speak to Him! Ask Him to have mercy on you and open your mouth to tell Him what you need.

Many great and famous *zaddikim* have said that all their achievements came only through *hitbodedut*. Anyone with understanding can recognize the supreme value of this practice, which ascends to the most sublime heights. This advice applies to everyone equally, from the very least to the very greatest. Everyone is capable of practising it and can attain great levels. Happy are all who persist in it. . . .

A person of understanding who wants the truth will be led by God in the path of truth, and he will learn how to practise *hitbodedut* and offer words of grace and sound arguments to persuade God to bring him to true service.

Hitbodedut rises to a very high place. This applies especially to turning *Torah* teachings into prayers, which creates the greatest delight above.

Hitbodedut is the highest level: it is greater than everything.

Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, Likkutei Moharan 2:25, ERNG

From the smallest to the greatest, it is impossible to be a truly good person without *hitbodedut*.

Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav, Likkutei Moharan 1:10, ERNG

See also: **devekut** (8.1), **hishtavut** (8.1), **hitbonenut**, **khalwah** (8.4), **zeruf**.

1. Levi ben Gershon (Gersonides), *Milḥemat ha-Shem* 2:6, *MSLG* fol.19a; in *MKAK* p.16.
2. Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* p.2.
3. See Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Bible*, *MBAK* pp.8–10, 156 (n.14); Tom Block, “Moses Maimonides and the Sufis of Islam,” *MMSI*, *passim*.
4. *Deuteronomy* 11:13.
5. *Psalms* 16:8.
6. See Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and the Kabbalah*, *MBAK* p.16.

7. See Eitan Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, LBDF p.252.
8. See Moshe Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, SEKI p.105.
9. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, MTGS pp.147–55.
10. Song of Songs 5:2.
11. 2 Samuel 23:2.
12. Eleazar Hazikri, *Sefer Haredim*, SHEA fol.66a, in IKMH p.50.

hitbonenut (He) *Lit.* contemplation; meditation; deep, concentrated reflection on or consideration of a particular subject; internal contemplation using concentration techniques that attempt to still the thinking process; use of the intellect to strip away physical existence by concentrated reflection upon the unity of one's own nature and the material world within the absolute unity of God, in order to bring about spiritual transformation and transcendence of this world.¹

Hitbonenut is sometimes confused with *hitbodedut*. *Hitbodedut* is a general term for meditation and literally means 'self-seclusion'. *Hitbonenut* is a kind of intellectual concentration or contemplation on an idea or concept, such as God's greatness, His love, compassion, immanence, transcendence, the structure of creation, and so on.

Hitbonenut as deep reflection implies a kind of intellectual contemplation in which the practitioner thinks deeply on a spiritual subject such as God Himself and His qualities, and enters a meditative state in which the attention is detached from the material world, deeply focused on the subject of contemplation.

Hitbonenut first appears in kabbalistic literature from the middle of the thirteenth century, where it refers to contemplation on the concept of the *sefirot* (emanation of divine qualities by which the creation was projected). This kind of intellectual contemplation or concentration is also called *kavanah* (intention, concentration). The early kabbalist Isaac the Blind (c. 1160–1235) wrote that *hitbonenut* on the *sefirot* revealed the divine Reality concealed by the duality of creation.

In the literature of the *Habad hasidim*, *hitbonenut* is used to describe an intellectual process of concentrating on the "spiritual vitality that underlies physical manifestations so as to see in everything 'its supreme Root and Source'".² It is a way of transcending the physical and attaching oneself to the non-material spiritual reality. Describing the contemplation practices of the *Habad hasidim*, Rachel Elior explains that the purpose of *hitbonenut* is to provide an intellectual or conceptual framework by which the processes of creation can be understood:

Worship in contemplation, which is the foundation of worship in self-annihilation, is involved with intellectual study and rational speculation on the existence of *yesh* (something, substance, being) and *ayin*

(nothing). The Hebrew term for contemplation, *hitbonenut*, derives from *tevunah* (intelligence, understanding), and its purpose is to endow man, through consideration of the process of emanation from *ayin* to *yesh*, with a conceptual structure for interpreting the whole range of his experience and to provide him with an intellectual horizon beyond the borders of his normal consciousness and sensory perception.

Rachel Elior, Paradoxical Ascent to God, PAGH p.159

Quoting Aharon Halevi Horowitz (1766–1828), Elior adds:

Contemplation is the basis of divine worship according to *Habad*, for it corrects myopic human consciousness and deciphers the illusion of the sensory perception. It exchanges the ‘eyes of flesh’ for ‘eyes of the intellect’. “But, without understanding of His blessed unity in the worlds, even if one believes that He fills the entire earth with His glory, the worlds appear to be truly corporeal, and the blessed Holy One is infinitely devoid of corporeality.”³

Rachel Elior, Paradoxical Ascent to God, PAGH p.160

The *Habad hasidim* taught that study of the kabbalistic doctrine of the infinite and divine Unity and the manner by which creation has come into being would arouse an awareness of the divine presence in all things. This in turn would lead to a devotional attachment to God:

Habad assumed that intellectual study of the Kabbalah, projected upon the world of divinity and the human soul, would clarify the truth of things beyond their illusory appearance and arouse the emotional transformation that stimulates love, bringing about the cleaving to God, enthusiastic fervour, and the annihilation of being. Hence, the teachers of *Habad* demanded that kabbalistic study become a religious duty incumbent on every Jew, an exoteric attitude that deviates significantly from the traditional esoteric attitude.

Rachel Elior, Paradoxical Ascent to God, PAGH p.161

Elior goes on to describe the spiritual ‘fruits’ of such contemplation, which lead to the devotional state of *hitpa‘alut* (ecstasy, fervour):

Cognizance of the unity of the divinity or understanding the paradoxical presence of the divinity within the worlds, which simultaneously unites being and nothingness, as well as His unwavering unity and His transformations – these are the fruits of contemplation. To achieve them one must ponder, understand and interpret the meaning of kabbalistic theosophy regarding *zimzum* (withdrawal of God into Himself)

and emanation, the descending chain of being, the ‘garbing’ of divinity within the world, unity and change, the doctrine of the *sefirot* and that of the multiple ‘worlds’. All of these concepts are defined as ‘knowledge of the Kabbalah’. Contemplation is intended as a means for *hitpa’alut* or mystical awakening, to break through the boundaries of the *yesh* (substance, being) and empirical consciousness and to achieve mystical union, areas that the Jewish tradition has regarded as the elitistic province of the chosen few.

Rachel Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent to God*, PAGH pp.162–63

Depending upon their temperament, some among the *Ḥabad ḥasidim* favoured the more intellectual approach of *hitbonenut*, others *hitlahavut* (enthusiasm, ecstasy) and *hitpa’alut* (ecstasy), the devotional approach. Rabbi Dov Baer Schneerson, son and successor of Rabbi Shneur Zalman, considered both approaches and their relationship in his *Kuntres ha-Hitbonenut* (‘Tract on Contemplation’) and *Kuntres ha-Hitpa’alut* (‘Tract on Ecstasy’), both first published in 1814. In his introduction to *Kuntres ha-Hitbonenut*, he writes:

The essence of this tract speaks of the matter of the unity of divinity in every single detail in the order of the descending chain of the ten *sefirot*. It is a brief statement of everything which a person can bring to his intellect . . . in all the details of the chain (of creation), from the initial *zimzum* to the end of the world of deeds (*i.e.* this world), and it is called *A Tract on Contemplation*.

Rabbi Dov Baer Schneerson, *Ner Miẓvah ve-Torah Or*,
Sha’ar ha-Yiḥud, Introduction, NMTO, in PAGH p.161

See also: **devekut** (8.1), **hishtavut** (8.1), **hitbodedut**, **khalwah** (8.4), **zeruf**.

1. Cf. Rachel Elior, *Paradoxical Ascent to God*, PAGH p.225.
2. Rachel Elior, *Mystical Origins of Hasidism*, MOHE p.119.
3. Aharon Halevi Horowitz, *Sha’arei ha-Yiḥud ve-ha-Emunah*, Introduction, SYEA.

huándǔ, huándū (C) *Lit.* encircling (*huán*) wall(s) (*dǔ*); surrounding walls, a walled enclosure; a meditation enclosure; a small meditation hut originally used for prolonged retreats lasting from one hundred days to three or more years, but later for much shorter periods as well; sometimes, as ‘*huándǔ* practice’ or the ‘practice of *huándǔ*’, implies a meditation retreat; in early Daoism, the term appears to be used similarly to *jìngshì* or *xiánshì* (quiet room, meditation room). *Huándū* is a rare variant of *huándǔ*.

Although the word had probably appeared by the fourth century BCE (appearing twice in the *Zhuāngzǐ*, c.C3rd BCE), it only became recognized

as a term relating to meditation around the time that the *Shàngqīng* school of Daoism was established (C5th CE). *Huándǔ*, however, is most commonly associated with the *Quánzhēn* school (founded C12th), where dwelling in or retiring to a *huándǔ* became common practice, particularly among reclusive adepts. The *Quánzhēn* idea of retirement to a *huándǔ* bears analogies to the *Chán* Buddhist practice of *bìguān* (‘wall gazing’, contemplation) in a *chánkū* (meditation cell or cave; S. *dhyāna-guhā*).

In its earliest usage, *dǔ* refers to the dimensions of a wall.¹ Though accurate measurements are difficult to establish, the hut would have been very small, with a door and possibly one window. Despite this, some reclusive adepts chose to live in a *huándǔ* for very long periods, even permanently. In a collection of his recorded discourses, master Mǎ Yù (C12th) recalls the dedicated efforts of master Liú Biàngōng (*aka.* Gāoshàng, ‘the Sublime’, C12th), an advanced spiritual adept famed for having spent many years in secluded meditation. Master Liú Biàngōng had

lived forty years in a small meditation hut (*huándǔ*). He did nothing other than simply empty his mind and fill his belly (*shí qí fù*, *i.e.* absorb himself in the *Dào*). He detached himself from all finery, forgot about fame (*míng*), discarded personal advantage (*lì*), purified his spirit (*shén*), and kept his *qì* (life energy) whole. His spiritual practice bore fruit, and his (spiritual) immortality was attained naturally.

Mǎ Yù, *Dānyáng zhēnrén yǔlù*, DZ1057 8b

See also: *xiánshì*.

1. See David Knechtges, *Wen Xuan*, WXXI p.186 (note to line 94).

huàtóu (C), **watō** (J) *Lit.* subject (*huà*) head (*tóu*); a subject under investigation, the essential gist of a discussion; in *Chán* and *Zen* Buddhism, a topic of meditative enquiry; the essence of the paradox or enigma underlying a *kōan*, used as a focus for meditation (C. *kānhuà Chán*, J. *kannazen*). See **kānhuà Chán**.

huíguāng (C) *Lit.* to turn (*huí*) the light (*guāng*); to reverse the light; a common Daoist expression for withdrawing one’s attention (one’s light) from the outer physical world and turning it towards the inner spiritual world – during both daily life and spiritual practice; the practice of inner awareness, a form of Daoist and *Chán* Buddhist meditation; often used in conjunction or synonymously with *fǎnzhào* (to revert the radiance, to turn within) and *nèizhào* (to look within).

The attention of most people is naturally outward – towards the world in which they live. However, Daoist masters teach that the real nature of a

human being is the original or inherent spirit, which needs to be returned to or reunited with its source, the *Dào*. Daoist masters have taught various methods of redirecting the attention from the material world to the inner spiritual reality. Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) likens the practice to the use of a candle to illuminate the inside of a house rather than the outside. It is, he says, a mistake to focus the attention outwardly, seeking worldly gain, instead of inwardly in search of spiritual gain:

Lighting a room with a candle makes it bright inside and dark outside. Moving the candle outside makes it bright outside and dark inside.

As I observe this, I realize that this is the *dào* (way, principle) of using light to illuminate what is true and what is false.

Human knowledge and intelligence are like the light of a candle. Mistakenly using the light outside, people become competitive and eager to outdo others – seeking fame and fortune (*mínglì*), scheming and calculating day and night, thinking thousands of thoughts, running after the false, and losing their origin. This is being bright without, but dark within. Yet they will not stop until the body is harmed and life is lost.

Anyone who can give up the false (*jiǎ*) and return to the True (*zhēn*), relinquish cleverness and reject craftiness, take (their original) nature and life as the single most important matter, reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and turn within (*fǎnzhào*), refine the self and control the mind, contemplate all things with detachment, be empty of all things and unmoved by external things, be unaffected by worldly contamination – they are bright (*míng*) within and dark (*àn*) without, and potentially worthy to be called saints (*shèng*), immortals (*xiān*), or buddhas (*fó*).

Brightness that does not appear bright (*bùmíng zhī míng*) is great enlightenment (*gāomíng*). As the scripture says: “Great intelligence may appear to be stupidity (*yú*). A great expert may look clumsy (*zhuō*).”¹

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

The term *huíguāng* is used extensively in the anonymous *Secret of the Golden Flower* (C17th), which is based on the teachings of master Lǚ Dòngbīn (b.796 CE). As a lay manual of Buddhist and Daoist methods for clarifying and purifying the mind, it depicts inner illumination as the flowering of the mind, which results when the light of awareness and attention is turned towards its Source. The text explains that, once turned around, this light of awareness becomes the master of the mind as it penetrates through the “mysterious pass” and “ascends nine-skies high”, *i.e.* into the heavens, beyond the influence of worldly conditioning. The innate and natural ‘spiritual body’ then recovers full awareness of its heavenly origin:

The practice of reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is entirely related to the method of reversal (*nì*) in order to focus on the inherent mind (*tiānxīn*) that dwells within the sun and moon (between the eyes, at the transition between the physical and the spiritual, in the union of *yīn* and *yáng*). . . . Confucians call it the ‘centre of emptiness (*xūzhōng*)’. Buddhists call it the ‘plateau of consciousness (*língtái*)’. Daoists call it the ‘homeland (*zǔtǔ*)’, ‘yellow court (*huángtíng*)’, ‘mysterious pass (*xuánguān*)’, and ‘inherent opening (*xiāntiān qiào*)’.

The inherent mind (*tiānxīn*) is like a house. The light is the master of the house (*zhǔrénwēng*). When the light is reversed (*huíguāng*), all the body energies focus and ascend. It is like when the sage-king establishes and resides in his capital city, people from all directions converge, bringing along their treasures. It is also like when a master is refined and pure, his servants naturally follow his orders and take care in their duties. As long as you focus on reversing the light (*huíguāng*), that is the ultimate profound truth.

The light (*guāng*) is dynamic and difficult to stabilize. Only after it has been reversed (*huí*) for a long time, can the light be concentrated and focused in the natural (*zìrán*) spiritual body (*fǎshēn*), so that the spirit can be focused and can ascend nine-skies high (into the heavens). This is what is meant when the *Mind Seal Scripture* says “silently focus and ascend (*fěishēng*)”.²

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 1, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Concentrating the attention and turning it around is dependent upon the alchemical “firing” that burns off all the mind’s dross and compulsions while preventing leakage of spiritual energy. Such work is not done in a hurry. A prolonged period (notionally, “a hundred days”) of patient, concentrated practice is required, just as a couple wait patiently for the birth of a child:

After a hundred days of practising concentration, the light (*guāng*) becomes true and turns into the fire of spirit (*shén*). Automatically, after a hundred days, one particle of the true *yáng* (*i.e.* spirituality, the positive spirit) within the light suddenly produces a bead the size of a millet grain. This (process) is like a husband and wife who have intercourse in order to create an embryo, but (the birth of the baby) must then be patiently awaited. The reversal of light (*guāng zhī huí*) is the ‘firing process (*huǒhòu*)’.

Since the beginning of creation, the light of *yáng* has been the master. In manifested form, it is the sun. In a human being, it is the eyes. And through the eyes flows the thinking spirit (*shíshén*, the thinking and knowing aspect of the mind, the intellect). This is the

flow (of creation). So the way of the golden flower (*jīnhuá*) is, in sum, the method of reversal (*nì*).

The reversal of light (*huíguāng*) is not reversing the light of the body's vital essence (*jīnghuá*), but the complete withdrawal (*huí*) of the true Energy (*zhēnqì*) of creation (from the body). It is not the momentary stillness of delusional thoughts, but the complete ending of thousands of aeons (*S. kalpas*) of reincarnations.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 3, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

The lower soul (*pò*) is controlled and its darkness dissipated when the pure light of the higher soul (*hún*) is restored by turning the light around:

Reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is to refine the higher soul (*hún*) so that the spirit (*shén*) is preserved, so that the lower soul (*pò*) is restrained, and so that the intellect is abandoned.

The ancient method of transcending the world is to smelt away all impurities of *yīn* (i.e. negativity, materiality) in order to revert to pure *yáng* (i.e. positivity, spirituality). All this does is simply to dispel the lower soul (*pò*) in order to complete the higher soul (*hún*).

Reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is the secret of dispelling *yīn* and restraining the lower soul (*pò*). Although there is no exercise by which to revert to *yáng*, since the light is itself *yáng*, so long as you possess the secret of reversing the light (*huíguāng*), this is reverting to *yáng*.

So long as you persevere in this method, the water of vital essence (*jīng*) will automatically be full, the fire of the spirit will develop, the earth of attention will freeze in stillness, and the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*) will manifest.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 2, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Once the light of awareness has been turned around, the entire life of a practitioner is transformed as he becomes the wisdom-giving light itself. Then a practitioner recognizes the *Dào* in everything:

The light (*guāng*) is neither within the body nor outside the body. Mountains, rivers, the earth, the sun, and the moon are all nothing but this light – so it is not solely within the body. All the functions of intelligence and knowledge are nothing but this light – so it is not solely outside the body. The radiance of heaven and earth pervades the entire creation. The radiance of the body also pervades the body from top to bottom. So when the light is reversed (*huíguāng*), then everything in creation – heaven and earth, mountains and rivers – all revert (to the light).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 3, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Turning the light around results in the mind becoming so pure that it is freed from duality. At first the practitioner is aware of seeking nonbeing within his own being, but ultimately he becomes aware that his own being is one with nonbeing – that in fact there is no separate individual being at all:

When the light is reversed (*huíguāng*), then all the energies of heaven and earth, *yīn* and *yáng* are concentrated. This is the same as ‘refined attention’, ‘pure energy’, and ‘pure contemplation’.

When you first practise this technique, there seems to be emptiness within existence. After a prolonged period of practice, when you have attained embodiment beyond the body (*shēnwài yǒushēn*), then there seems to be existence within emptiness.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 3, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

Sitting quietly in the early hours consolidates the practice, which then continues during normal daily existence. The more the light is turned around, the more the mind is freed from the disturbance of thoughts and emotional reactions:

As you follow the practice of reversing the light (*huíguāng*), do not neglect your duties. One of the ancients said: “Attend to affairs as they come and leave them as they go. See things for what they are as they come along.”

Attend to affairs with an upright attitude, then the light (*guāng*) will not be drawn to things and will be automatically reversed. This is the practice of reversing the light (*huíguāng*) at all times in order to empty (the mind of) forms. . . .

If, during the day, you can keep turning within (*fǎnzhào*, ‘revert the radiance’) while attending to things, staying completely detached from others and the self, this is reversing the light (*huíguāng*) wherever you are. This is the most sublime aspect of the practice.

It is best to sit in meditation (*jìngzuò*) for one to two hours in the early morning in order to clear away all worldly connections. Practise the method of turning within (*fǎnzhào*) at all times, without interruption, while dealing with affairs and attending to things. Continue the practice for two to three months, then the sages (*zhūzhēn*) in the heavens will surely appear before you in affirmation.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 7, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

And:

The method of reversing the light (*huíguāng*) is to be practised whether you are idle or active, whether sitting or sleeping. In this way, you will automatically discover the essential opening (*qiào*).

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 10, JH94, JY161, XB1, ZW334

The light is a positive power that dispels the fundamental negativity of the mind and automatically detaches it from outer things. When the worldly (negative) *yīn* energy is stilled, the spiritual (positive) *yáng* energy will manifest:

When you reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*), you will no longer be pulled out by created things; *yīn* energy will be stilled and the radiance of the light (*guānghuá*) will be a concentrated brilliance, which is pure *yáng*.

Jīnhuá zōngzhǐ 8, *JH94*, *JY161*, *XB1*, *ZW334*

The process of turning within, of rekindling the lamp of enlightenment, takes time and patience:

Your impurities have accumulated over a prolonged period and are impossible to clear all at once. But in fact, in the great affair of life and death, once you have reversed the light (*huíguāng*) of your attention, and have recollected the essential spirit (*jīngshén*), keeping it always directed within, then your own mind becomes the lamp of enlightenment. . . . Everyone already has this lamp of mind within themselves, and when it is lit, you become a great eternal immortal (*chángshēng bùsǐ dàxiānrén*).

Huì Jué, *Lǚzǔ jīnhuá chǎnyōu wèndá*, *JY161* 20b

The process may be summarized as freeing the mind from external objects and entanglements, while reversing and concentrating it so that it becomes aware of its own pure and luminous nature or source. Master Yáng Dàoshēng (C15th) writes:

Yuán Tàixū said, “The way to focus the spirit (*shén*) at the opening of energy (*qìxué*) is simply to withdraw the attention from seeing and hearing, and to reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*). That’s all there is to it.” . . .

Yú Yùwú (C14th) said, “The immortals’ (*shénxiān*) method of refining and cultivating is to reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*), to breath the universal harmony in and out (*hūxī tàihé*). This is the method by which you can return to your original Source and recover the original state you knew at the very beginning when you first took bodily birth.”

To reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*) is not about deliberately and obsessively trying to find a particular location of the original spirit (*yín’è*). It is to turn the attention towards it and to contemplate (*guān*) and reflect (*zhào*). It is simply remaining empty and still (*xūjìng*), so that the spirit may turn inward.

In most cases, the mind of worldly people runs out wildly all day long. Yet all its many skills and clever improvisations are only reflections or shadows of the light of the spirit. And you can readily see that if the attention of the spirit is always directed one way towards externals, then your own body and inner self will remain unattended.

Right now, there is no need to seek here, there, and everywhere. Simply collect the spirit that is looking (*zhào*) outside, let go of all your external skills and clever improvisations, and single-mindedly control, collect, and turn it within, clear away the debris of a multitude of thoughts and worries. This is to reverse the light (*fǎnguāng*) and look within (*nèizhào*). In reality, when contemplating (*guān*), there is nothing to contemplate (*guān*); when looking (*zhào*), there is nothing to look at (*zhào*). But this is not to say that you are not to contemplate (*guān*) or look (*zhào*).

Throughout the entire human body, there is only this one original Energy (*yīgè yuánqì*), without such differences as exist between the heart, the liver, the spleen, the lungs, and the kidneys. But in ordinary human beings, this energy is enslaved by worldly attachments (*lit.* earthly roots). It wanders about, and is scattered and consumed externally. So there is no other method for attaining the elixir (*dān*) than to withdraw and collect this energy at a place of deep profundity by reversing the light (*huíguāng*) and turning within (*fǎnzhào*).

Yáng Dàoshēng, Zhēnquán, JY244, ZW373

The difference between directing awareness towards the outer world and directing awareness within is again pointed out by master Liú Yīmíng:

When the light (of awareness) is directed outward, the fire (the spirit) cannot return to the Origin. Delusional passions are stirred and true passion (spiritual yearning) is hidden. When the light (of awareness) is directed inward, a human being returns to the Root. The false is transformed into the True. The excitable nature dissolves and the true nature is revealed. Whether the light (of awareness) is inside or outside, inward or outward, is distinguished by whether or not it is unified. How can those who practise the *Dào* not reverse the light (*huíguāng*) and turn within (*fǎnzhào*) towards nurturing the light?

Liú Yīmíng, Kōngyì (38, 37) chǎnzhēn, Záguà zhuàn, ZW246

See also: **meditation (Daoism), nèizhào.**

1. See *Dàodé jīng* 20.
2. *Xīnyìn jīng*, DZ13.

huǒhòu (C) *Lit.* fire (*huǒ*) time (*hòu*); fire season, fire phase; heat control; in *wàidān* (outer alchemy), the duration and intensity of the smelting or firing process; used metaphorically in the Daoist *nèidān* (inner alchemy) tradition for the ‘firing process’ or phase of spiritual practice in which a person’s inner energies and being are purified. Different levels of self-cultivation and refinement have been identified.

Master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) describes *huǒhòu* as “the method and process of cultivation and refinement”.¹ In his *Dispelling Doubts on Symbolic Language*, he provides a detailed explanation:

The firing process (*huǒhòu*) – referred to by various masters in alchemical scriptures and books – is a metaphor for the steps described in the method of cultivation. There is an order of first and next; there is the intensity of accelerating, and there is slowing down. In one’s practice, there are times of advancing and times of consolidating.... Just as the preparation of medicines sometimes requires low heat and sometimes high heat, so there is advancing and consolidating, stopping and fulfilling. Therefore, the times and degrees of effort in the cultivation of Truth are depicted as the firing process (*huǒhòu*).

However, the firing process (*huǒhòu*) is not limited to a particular time, date, month, or year. It can be practised at any time. Any time that is suitable for the first step, then do it first; any moment that is suitable for the next step, do it next. Any time that is good for accelerating, accelerate; any time that is good for slowing down, slow down. Any time that is good for advancing, advance; any time that is good for consolidating, consolidate....

“Suitable for the first step” means: first control yourself inwardly. “Suitable for the next step” means: next govern yourself externally. “Good for accelerating” means: to accelerate the practice. “Good for slowing down” means: slowing down to nurture gently. “Good for advancing” means: to add *yáng* (*i.e.* positivity) when there is a lack of *yáng*. “Good for consolidating” means: to reduce *yīn* (*i.e.* negativity) when *yīn* grows.

This is the true meaning of the firing process (*huǒhòu*).

Liú Yīmíng, Xiàngyán pòyí, ZW247, DS14

Provided that spiritual practice is carried out in accordance with the instructions of an enlightened master, the goal will be achieved naturally and at the right time. As master Liú Yīmíng explains, patience, endurance and single-minded focus are required for the cultivation of the spirit. Concurrently, stillness of body and mind (“furnace and cauldron”) will ensure a natural outcome:

The firing process (*huǒhòu*) is the progression of exercises during cultivation. . . . You must not let the process be forced – just focus single-mindedly at the centre. . . . Then, quite naturally (*zìrán*), a precious jewel the size of a millet grain will erupt from the furnace of creation and its transformations (*zàohuà*), permeating heaven and earth, unhindered by anything in any direction, since it is one with the Void.

Like an oyster containing a pearl, whose energy is not scattered; like a hen sitting on an egg, whose attention does not go out – at the appropriate time in the firing process (*huǒhòu*), the pearl automatically becomes complete, and the chick automatically hatches. . . . A stable furnace and cauldron ensure no failures. A perfect firing process (*huǒhòu*) manifests the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*, inherent spiritual potential and awareness). But this subtle process must be taught by a master (*shī*). It cannot be done by arbitrary guesswork.

Liú Yīmíng, Wùdào lù, ZW268, DS18

In his explanation of the eleventh-century master Zhāng Bódūān's *Four Hundred Words on the Golden Elixir*, master Liú Yīmíng again says that while the practice should not be forced, there are times for determined effort:

The firing process (*huǒhòu*) refers to the level of intensity of the process. The *yáng* furnace is the exercise of intense refinement by forceful heating. It does not mean there is a physical furnace; but, because the exercise uses 'fire' to smelt and refine the great medicines of spiritual truth, so it is likened to a furnace.

Liú Yīmíng, Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

Concluding his commentary, master Liú Yīmíng says that saints and sages since ancient times have often been intentionally vague concerning the details of spiritual cultivation. Fearing misappropriation of their teachings by unsuitable people, they have spoken of the end without spelling out the means, or have explained things through parables and metaphors. He therefore offers students 'twenty-four secrets of alchemy' in the form of poetry. Summarizing these, he says that it is essential to examine, understand and follow precisely the instructions ("every step") of an enlightened master:

Every step of the firing process (*huǒhòu*) in the twenty-four verses must be examined and understood. The slightest deviation is the same as missing (a target) by a thousand miles.

Liú Yīmíng, Dānfǎ èrshísì jué, in Jīndān sībǎi zì jiě, ZW266, DS12

1. Liú Yīmíng, *Wùzhēn zhízhǐ*, ZW253, DS17.

hūsh dar dam (P) *Lit.* awareness (*hūsh*) of (*dar*) breath (*dam*). *Hūsh* means understanding, memory, mind, and the expression *hūsh dar dam* is used among Sufis, especially of the *Naqshbandīyah* order, to imply mindfulness of God at all moments, so that no breath should be wasted. ‘Ināyat Khān writes:

The Sufis, considering their life as a journey toward the spiritual goal, recite in order to awaken their group to this idea, “*Hūsh dar dam, naẓar bar qadam, khalvat dar anjuman*,” which means, “Let the breath be God-conscious at each swing; watch your steps and realize who walks, keeping your eyes lowered that the tempting world may not attract them; realize yourself amid this crowd of the world of variety.”

‘Ināyat Khān, *Sufi Message*, SMIK8e p.33

He relates how, in his youth, after a night of prayer and soul-searching, he encountered a group of dervishes who chanted this refrain:

The morning broke and the birds began their hymn of praise to God. I heard men and women pass by below, some going to the mosque, others to the temples, and the general masses to the toil that yields their daily bread. Then I too fared forth and, lost in thought, not knowing my destination, made my way towards the jungle, with an inner yearning to be apart from the world and give an outlet to the thoughts and emotions with which my mind was occupied.

Thus I arrived at a cemetery where a group of dervishes sat on the green grass, chattering together. They were all poorly clad, some without shoes and others without coats; one had a shirt with only one sleeve and another lacked them both. One wore a robe with a thousand patches and the next a hat without a crown. This strange group attracted my attention, and I sat there for some time, noticing all that was going on yet feigning to be utterly indifferent.

Presently their *pīr-u murshid* or master came towards them, even more scantily dressed than they, and with a group of dervishes circling round him as he approached. Two of the latter led the odd procession, and with each step they cried out loudly, “*Hūsh dar dam, naẓar bar qadam, khalvat dar anjuman!*” – Be conscious of your breath, and watch every step you take, and thus experience solitude in the crowd!

When the *murshid* arrived at the assembly of his disciples each one greeted the other, saying, “*Ishq Allāh, maḥbūb Allāh* (God is love and God is beloved)!” It was this very greeting which later unveiled for me the Bible words that God is love, and also the verse of the Arabian poet Abū al-Allāh, who says:

Church, temple, or *Ka’bah* stone,
Qur’ān or Bible, or a martyr’s bone –

All these and more my heart can tolerate
since my religion is of love alone.

The solemnity of the sacred words they uttered found their echo in my
soul, thereupon I watched their ceremonial with still greater attention.

'Ināyat Khān, Sufi Message, SMIK12 pp.140–41

See also: **kalimāt-i qudsīyah**.

ichimi zen (J) *Lit.* one-flavour (*ichi-mi*) Zen; single-taste Zen, authentic or genuine Zen; pure Zen practice, unadulterated by other practices; Zen as believed to have originated from the Buddha and the *Chán* and *Zen* patriarchs; an expression used by Eihei Dōgen Zenji (1200–1253), founder of the *Sōtō* school of Zen; often mentioned along with *gomi zen* (five-flavour Zen), which is a classification of the varieties of meditation by the Chinese monk Guīfēng Zōngmì (780–840).

Dōgen believed the *sūtras* to be a complete and authentic source of the teachings of the Buddha and the patriarchs, indeed the only authentic source. Misunderstanding them can lead to incorrect forms of practice based on incorrect interpretations. *Ichimi zen* is Dōgen's name for the one authentic way in which to understand *sūtras* and the resulting meditation practice.

See also: **gomi zen**.

ikhfā' (A/P) *Lit.* concealment; in Sufism, complete silence concerning inner mystical experiences, as opposed to *kitmān*, which has been described more as reticence than complete concealment, especially with regard to the expression of mystical teachings. Shāh Dā'ī Shīrāzī writes:

Know that concealment (*ikhfā'*)
means concealment (*pinhān*) in every respect.
Have you not heard that God's friends (*awliyā'*)
are concealed (*ikhfā'*) with respect to their friendship?

Dā'ī Shīrāzī, Kullīyāt 1739–40, KSDS1 p.107; cf. in SSE11 p.25

Intimate spiritual matters that cannot be understood by others are best kept secret; and concerning personal, spiritual matters – talking about them is irrelevant, and by so doing their depth may be dissipated and the experience lost.

See also: **kitmān** (8.1).

indriya-vash(a) (S/H) *Lit.* control (*vasha*) of the senses (*indriya*); mastery of the senses. See **ashṭāṅga yoga, pratyāhāra** (►4).

inipi, initipi (Lakota) *Lit.* to take a steam bath (*ini*) + dwelling (*tipi*); a Native American rite performed in a sweat lodge or a purification lodge; by extension, the sweat lodge itself; originally a rite peculiar to the many tribes of Plains Indians, but more recently adopted by other Indian nations; *inipi* is a contraction of *initipi*. See **sweat lodge**.

inner prayer, interior prayer, inward prayer General terms for a variety of spiritual forms of prayer in which the attention is focused within, away from the senses; an attitude in which the mind and soul continuously look up to God; a synonym for the prayer of Jesus, as practised in the Orthodox Church. In general terms:

Ceaseless interior prayer is a continual yearning of the human spirit towards God.

Way of a Pilgrim, WPW p.2

It is truly listening to the Divine, in a state of inner silence:

True inner prayer is to stop talking and to listen to the wordless voice of God within our heart; it is to cease doing things on our own, and to enter into the action of God.

Kallistos Ware, Power of the Name, PNW p.8

Though it brings great blessings, in the majority of cases, the mind does not readily take to it, but vacillates:

At first, the practice of inward prayer is a process of alternation of attention between outer things and the inner light. Preoccupation with either brings the loss of the other. Yet what is sought is not alternation, but simultaneity, worship undergirding every moment, living prayer, the continuous current and background of all moments of life. Long practice indeed is needed before alternation yields to concurrent immersion in both levels at once.

Thomas Kelly, Testament of Devotion, TDK p.13

But once the practice is established, then communion with the Divine becomes increasingly habitual, until it is the major activity of a day:

Let inward prayer be your last act before you fall asleep and the first act when you awake.

Thomas Kelly, *Testament of Devotion*, TDK p.12

See also: **ceaseless prayer, prayer of Jesus, prayer of the heart.**

interior recollection See **recollection.**

iriyāpatha (Pa), **īryāpatha** (S) *Lit.* manner (*patha*) of movement (*iriyā*); posture, mode of deportment; specifically, the second of the six practices included in *kāyānupassanā* (contemplation of the body), as described in the *Kāyagatāsati, Satipaṭṭhāna* and *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Suttas*;¹ four basic postures to which mindfulness should be applied, *viz.* walking, standing, sitting and lying down, *i.e.* “however his body is disposed”:

When walking, a *bhikkhu* is aware: “I am walking;” when standing, he is aware: “I am standing;” when sitting, he is aware: “I am sitting;” when lying down, he is aware: “I am lying down;” or he is aware of however his body is disposed.

In this way, he abides contemplating internal, ... external ... or both internal and external aspects of a body. Or else he abides contemplating the arising, ... vanishing ... or both arising and vanishing aspects of a body. Or else mindfulness that ‘there is a body’ is simply established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how a *bhikkhu* abides contemplating the body as a body.

Majjhima Nikāya 119, Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, PTSM3 pp.56–57; cf. MDBB p.146

Mindfully observing the body’s “arising” and “vanishing” natures refers to things that come and go in the body, to be observed without clinging to them.

See also: **kāyānupassanā.**

1. *Dīgha Nikāya 22 (Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta), PTSD2 p.292; Majjhima Nikāya 10 (Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta), 119 (Kāyagatāsati Sutta), PTSM1 pp.56–57, PTSM3 p.89.*

ishṭa-deva, ishṭa-devatā (S), **yi dam** (T) *Lit.* chosen (*ishṭa*) deity (*deva, devatā*); beloved, cherished, respected, and revered deity; a tutelary (guiding,

protecting) deity (*yi dam*) particularly chosen for worship and/or meditation; also firm mind, promise, vow, mental commitment (*yi dam*). The full Tibetan term, commonly abbreviated to *yi dam*, is *yi dam gyi lha* (chosen deity).

Because it is difficult to relate to the seemingly abstract notion of a supreme Being or absolute Reality, many Hindu worshippers and devotees choose a particular deity as a focus for personal worship. This may be Kṛishṇa, Rāma, Viṣṇu, Shiva, Kālī and so on, or, especially but by no means exclusively in the tantric tradition, one of a large number of other deities, *ḍākinīs*, and celestial beings. Such deities are understood as a spiritual power or energy that can be invoked for help in life or as the giver of spiritual grace and blessings. The custom is prevalent throughout traditional Hindu worship as well as the tantric and yogic traditions. The forms of deity worship (*deva pūjā*, *devatā pūjā*) vary widely from simple traditional Hindu home and temple offerings and sacrifices accompanied by prayers and devotional singing, to the more elaborate tantric practices that include the use of rituals, *maṇḍalas*, the recitation of *mantras*, meditation, awakening of the *prāṇa* and *kundalinī*, and so on.

Swami Shivananda (1854–1934), a Hindu *guru* and disciple of Shri Ramakrishna, describes the various forms of meditation as being suitable for different temperaments. Meditation on an *ishṭa-devatā*, he says, is for those of a devotional and emotional temperament:

There are different kinds of meditation. A particular kind is best suited to a particular mind. The kind of meditation varies according to taste, temperament, capacity, and type of mind of the individual. A devotee (*bhakta*) meditates on his tutelary deity or *ishṭa-devatā*. A *rāja yogī* meditates on the special *Purusha* (Lord) or *Īshvara* (God) who is not touched by the afflictions, desires, and *karmas*. A *haṭha yogī* meditates on the *chakras* and their presiding deities. A *jñānī* (gnostic) meditates on his Self or *Ātman*. You will have to find out for yourself the kind of meditation that is suitable for you. If you are not able to do this, you will have to consult a teacher or preceptor who has attained self-realization. He will be able to know the nature of your mind and the correct method of meditation for you.

The mind assumes the form of the object it cognizes. . . . A *bhakta* constantly meditates on the form of his tutelary deity or *ishṭa-devatā*. The mind always takes the form of the deity. When he is established in his meditation, when he attains the stage of *para-bhakti* (supreme devotion), he only sees his *ishṭa-devatā* everywhere. Then names and forms vanish. A devotee of Lord Kṛishṇa only sees Lord Kṛishṇa everywhere, and experiences the state described in *Gītā*: “*Vāsudevaḥ sarvam iti* (Everything is Vāsudeva, i.e. Kṛishṇa).” A *jñānī* or a *vedāntī* sees his own Self or *Ātman* everywhere. The world of names and forms

vanishes from his view. He experiences the utterance of the seers of the *Upanishads*: “*Sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ Brahma* (all indeed is *Brahman*).”

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.193–94

Shivananda also provides some basic instructions on getting started. Since the *ishṭa-devatā* cannot be seen in a physical form and may even be mythological, he suggests using an artist’s representation to help develop concentration and devotion:

Gaze at the picture of the lord, your *ishṭa-devatā* for a few minutes and close your eyes. Then try to visualize the picture mentally. You will have a well-defined or clear-cut picture of the lord. When it fades, open your eyes and gaze again. Repeat the process five or six times. You will be able to visualize clearly your *ishṭa-devatā* or tutelary deity mentally after some months’ practice.

If you find it difficult to visualize the whole picture try to visualize any part of the picture. Try to produce even a hazy picture. By repeated practice, the hazy picture will assume a well-defined, clear-cut form. If you find this difficult, fix the mind on the effulgent light in the heart and take this as the form of the lord or *devī*.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.140–41

He also suggests the repetition (*japa*) of *mantras* (verbal formulae) to help control the mind and induce inner purity. With the deep concentration that results from such repetition, the mind identifies with the *ishṭa-devatā*:

By worship and meditation or *japa* of *mantras*, the mind is actually shaped into the form of the object of worship and is made pure for the time being through the purity of the object (namely, the *ishṭa-devatā*). By continual practice (*abhyāsa*), the mind becomes full of the object to the exclusion of all else, steady in its purity, and does not wander into impurity. So long as the mind exists, it must have an object, and the object of *sādhana* (spiritual discipline) is to present it with a pure one.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.216–17

He adds that meditation on an *ishṭa-devatā* is *saguṇa* (with attributes) meditation, which he contrasts with *nirguṇa* (without attributes, abstract) meditation in which the attention is focused on the seemingly abstract idea of the Absolute:

Meditation is of two main kinds, viz. *saguṇa* meditation and *nirguṇa* meditation. In *saguṇa* meditation the yogic student concentrates on the form of the Lord Kṛishṇa, Rāma, *Shiva*, *Hari*, *Gāyatrī*, or *Shrī Devī*.

In *nirguṇa* meditation, he concentrates the whole energy of the mind on one idea of God or *Ātman*, and avoids comparisons with memories and all other ideas. The one idea fills the whole mind.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS p.194

When the attention focuses to a sufficient degree in any form of meditation, it can – to a greater or lesser extent – become independent of the body and experience visions on subtle planes of consciousness. Thus, Shivananda observes that focused meditation on one's *ishṭa-devatā* can result in a variety of visions:

You will see two kinds of forms: lustrous forms of *devatās* and physical forms. You will see your *ishṭa-devatā* or tutelary deity in handsome dress and with various, valuable ornaments, flowers, garlands, with four hands and weapons. *Siddhas*, *rishis* (yogic adepts), *etc.*, will appear to encourage you. You will find a huge collection of *devatās* and celestial ladies with various musical instruments in their hands. You will see beautiful flower gardens, fine palatial buildings, rivers, mountains, golden temples, and sceneries so lovely and picturesque as cannot be adequately described.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.340–41

Sometimes, during meditation, you will get very powerful, dazzling lights, bigger than the sun. They are white. In the beginning, they come and fade away quickly. Later on, they are steady, they become fixed for ten or fifteen minutes or half an hour, according to the strength and degree of concentration. For those who concentrate on the *trikūṭa*, the space between the two eyebrows, the light appears in the forehead in the *trikūṭa*; while for others who concentrate on the top of the head, *sahasrāra chakra* (thousand-spoked wheel or lotus), the light manifests on the top of the head. The light is so powerful and dazzling sometimes that you have to withdraw yourself from looking at it and break the meditation. Some people are afraid and do not know what to do and how to proceed further. They come to me for instructions. I tell them that this is a new sensation which they have not hitherto experienced. By constant practice, the mind engaged in concentration will become used to it, and the fear will vanish. I ask them to go on with the practice. Some people concentrate on the heart, some on *trikūṭa*, and some on the top of the head. It is a question of personal taste. It is easy to control mind by concentrating on the *trikūṭa*. If you are used to fixing on the *trikūṭa*, stick to it always. Don't make frequent changes. Steadiness is very necessary.

The beings and objects with whom you are in touch during the early period of meditation belong to the astral world. They are similar to

human beings minus a physical overcoat. They have desires, cravings, love, hatred, *etc.*, just as human beings have. They have fine (subtle) bodies. They can move about freely. They have powers of materialization, dematerialization, multiplying, and clairvoyant vision of an inferior order. The lustrous forms are higher *devatās* of mental or higher planes who come down to give you *darshana* (audience) and encourage you. Various *shaktis* (spiritual powers) manifest in lustrous forms. Adore them; worship them; do mental *pūjā* (worship) as soon as they give you *darshana*. Angels are beings of mental or higher planes. They also appear before your mind's eye.

Sometimes, you will feel an invisible help, possibly from your *ishṭa-devatā*, when you are actually pushed from the physical body into the new plane. That invisible power assists in your separating from the body and going above body consciousness.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS pp.341–42

But regarding visions, he cautions:

Don't waste your time in looking at these visions. This is only a curiosity. These are all encouragements to convince you of the existence of superphysical, metaphysical realities and the solid existence of *Brahman*. Drive away these pictures. Fix yourself on the goal. . . . Advance. Proceed seriously and energetically.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS p.342

What is significant is that which leads on to higher levels of consciousness – the inner light and the vision of one's *ishṭa-devatā*:

You will sometimes see a vast bright golden light. Within the light you will see your *ishṭa-devatā* in front. Sometimes, you will see yourself within the light. You will see a golden-coloured light all around.

You may see your *ishṭa-devatā* as big as a mountain shining like the sun. You may see the figure during eating, drinking, and working. When you enjoy the bliss of this vision, you will experience no taste for food while eating. You will simply swallow the food. You will hear continuous ringing of the *vīṇā* (a stringed instrument). You may see the blazing light of the (inner) sun.

The object of your meditation will come before you much quicker if you practise regular meditation. You will feel as if you are covered by the object on which you meditate. You will see as if the whole space is illumined. Sometimes you will experience the sound of ringing bells. You will feel the inner peace of the soul.

Swami Shivananda, Concentration and Meditation, CMSS p.353

The Tibetan Buddhist equivalent of the *ishṭa-devatā*, the *yi dam*, often one of a number of celestial *buddhas* or *bodhisattvas*, is regarded as one of the three roots (*rtsa gsum*) – the *lama* or *guru*, the *yi dam*, and the *ḍākinī*. These are understood as the internal aspects of the three Buddhist jewels or refuges – the Buddha, the *Dharma* (teachings, Way), and the *sangha* (Buddhist community). The *lama* bestows blessings and mind-to-mind transmission; the *yi dam* confers *siddhi* (realization, accomplishment), together with instruction and authority through visions; and the *ḍākinī* is the root or basis of all activity that arises from enlightenment, such as spreading the *Dharma* and bringing comfort and peace of mind to sentient beings. Much is made in Tibetan tantrism of their interrelationships. Together, they are deemed of great significance:

Carry the holy *guru* like a hat stuck inseparably to your head! As for the *yi dam*, meditate on the *yi dam* in the centre of your heart like a mother nurturing her only child! Rely on the *ḍākinīs* like a wish-fulfilling jewel!

Padampa Sangye, in Lion of Siddhas, LSPS p.126

The function of the *yi dam* is understood to be more of an aid in the spiritual transformation of the practitioner, and is imbued with less of the protective attributes of the Hindu *ishṭa-devatā*.

In the tantric traditions, whether Hindu or Buddhist, the *ishṭa-devatā* or *yi dam* is assigned by a practitioner's *guru* or *lama*, according to the individual's nature. This creates a link or bond between the practitioner and his *yi dam* that will usually last a lifetime, and will help him in his efforts towards enlightenment. A single *yi dam* is sufficient because it is understood to embody the essence of all *buddhas* and *bodhisattvas*; therefore most practitioners adhere to one *yi dam* for life. Rarely, some practitioners adopt several *yi dams* upon whom they meditate at different times and circumstances; but for many practitioners this would be too confusing. Sometimes, a practitioner feels attracted towards a particular *yi dam*, maybe from an early age. This is generally explained as being due to an attachment to that *yi dam* formed in previous lives. Generally, a particular *yi dam* is also associated with a particular tantric lineage.

The *yi dam* is visualized to the accompaniment of offerings, prayers, *maṇḍalas*, and the recitation of *mantras*. The practitioner may consider himself to be in the presence of the deity or he may identify with the deity in the attempt to imbibe and manifest the deity's attributes. Meditation on the *yi dam* is an essential aspect of *utpatti-krama* (T. *bskyed rim*) and *nishpanna-krama*, which are the initial and the completion stages of spiritual transformation in *anuttara-yoga tantra*.

Different *yi dams* have different primary attributes. Compassion (*karuṇā*), for example, is the primary attribute of the celestial *buddha* Avalokiteshvara

(T. Chenrézig), and wisdom (*prajñā*) is associated with the celestial *bodhisattva* Mañjuśrī. Other *yi dams* include: the celestial *bodhisattva* Samantabhadra; celestial *buddhas* Amitābha, Vajrapāṇi, Chakrasaṃvara, Tāra, Hayagrīva, and Heruka; the deities *Vajrabhairava*, *Vairochana*, *Mahākāla*, and *Vajrayoginī*; and many others. As in many aspects of Tibetan tantrism, the practices vary from school to school and from lineage to lineage.

It is believed that for a practitioner who practises *yi dam* meditation assiduously, the *yi dam* will eventually appear either in person, in a vision, or in a dream. Once this contact has been made, the *yi dam* will appear to the practitioner at his time of death and guide him through the intermediate state (*bardo*).

See also: **nishpanna-krama**, **utpatti-krama**, **Vajrayāna** (►4).

jālandhara-bandh(a) (S/H) *Lit.* net (*jāla*) lock (*bandha*); one of the *bandhas* of *haṭha yoga*, in which the throat is constricted by bringing the chin onto the chest. *Jāla* probably refers to the network of nerves and arteries. See **haṭha yoga**.

jāp(a) (S/H/Pu), **jāp** (Pu), **bzlas brjod** (T), **niànsòng** (C), **nenju** (J) *Lit.* whispering, murmuring, muttering; the murmured repetition of a *mantra* or prayer; repetition, recitation, prayer, remembrance; the spoken, murmured or entirely silent and mental repetition of a *mantra*, prayer or name of God, perhaps accompanied by contemplation on the deity being invoked, either visualized in the imagination or on the form of an external idol or other iconographic representation.

Japa is practised in a wide variety of contexts and circumstances. The *Bhagavad Gītā* rates *japa* as the highest form of sacrifice or worship:

Among forms of worship (*yajña*), I am worshipped by *japa*.

Bhagavad Gītā 10:25

The *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* lists *japa* as one of the ten essential *niyamas* (observances) for the practice of *yoga*;¹ while Patañjali speaks of repetition (*japa*) and meditation on *Aum*, which he calls *Praṇava*, as the means to overcome obstacles on the path of *yoga*:

His manifest word is *Praṇava*.
By constant repetition (*japa*) of it
and meditation on its essence,
the attention turns within,
and all obstacles are overcome.

Patañjali, Yoga Sūtras 1:27–29

Here, *Aum̐* refers to both the mental repetition of *Aum̐* as a *mantra* and listening to the cosmic music of *Aum̐* as the creative power, which is experienced as a result of the concentrated mental repetition. In the *Ādi Granth*, the term *ajapā Jap* (unrepeated Repetition) refers to the same creative power.²

A great many *mantras* are used both in external forms of worship as well as internal meditation. Yogic practices that aim to awaken consciousness at the various subtle centres (*chakras*) within the body do so by means of the *japa* of a *mantra*, generally linked to control of the external breath and more subtle *prāṇa* (life energy).

The *Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā* visits an oft-repeated theme in yogic and tantric texts when observing that every person, while breathing in and out, unconsciously performs the repetition of “*so’ham̐* (I am That)” – one of the great truths of the *Upanishads* – or *ham̐-sa* (goose, generally translated as swan). *Ham̐sa* is a term used for both the pure and individual soul as well as the supreme Soul or God. The author refers to this unconscious ‘recitation’ as *ajapā japa* (unrepeated repetition), *ajapā gāyatrī*, and *ajapā mantra*:

The breath of every person on entering makes the sound of ‘*sa*’ and on coming out, that of ‘*ham̐*’. These two sounds make *so-ham̐* or *ham̐-sa*. During one day and one night, there are 21,600 such respirations (fifteen per minute). Every living being (*jīva*) performs this *japa* unconsciously, but constantly. This is called *ajapā gāyatrī*.

This *ajapā japa* is performed in three places: in the *mūlādhāra* (rectal *chakra*), in the *anāhata* lotus (the heart *chakra*), and in the *ājñā* lotus (the eye centre)...

All incarnate beings (*jīvas*) are constantly and unconsciously reciting this *ajapā mantra*, only for a fixed number of times every day. A *yogī* should recite this consciously, counting the numbers.

Gheraṇḍa Saṃhitā 5:84–85, 90; cf. *GSV* pp.50–51

The *Dhyānabindu Upanishad* is of the opinion that nothing equals the *japa* of this *mantra*:

It is known as *ajapā gāyatrī*, and has always been a bestower of *nirvāṇa* to the *yogīs*. Through the resolve alone (of repeating this *mantra*), man is freed from sins. Neither in the past, nor in the future, is there a science equal to this, a *japa* equal to this, or a meritorious deed equal to this.

Dhyānabindu Upanishad 63–65; cf. *TMU* p.157

Similar instructions appear in other yogic texts.³ Concentration at the rectal, heart or eye centres reflects the spread of consciousness among human beings. With some, the attention operates largely from the lowest centre, giving rise

to personality traits such as excessive orderliness, meanness, and a strong and stubborn attachment to things. Others operate from the emotional centre of the heart. Only a few function from the conscious seat of the mind and soul at the eye centre.

Various forms of *japa* are described, which are common to Hindu, yogic, Buddhist, and Jain traditions:

1. *Likhita-japa*. Written repetition; repeatedly writing out a *mantra*.
2. *Vaikhari-japa*. Spoken repetition; audible utterance of a *mantra*.
3. *Upāṃshu-japa*. Whispered repetition; whispering, humming, muttering or silently repeating a *mantra* with the lips.
4. *Mānasika-japa*. Mental repetition of a *mantra*.

According to Hindu sacred writings, *mantras* can be repeated for fulfilling desires or acquiring miraculous powers. Formulae such as *Auṃ Rāma Auṃ*, *Hari Auṃ*, *Rāma Rāma*, *Rāma Nāma* (Name of God), *Auṃ Tat Sat* (*Auṃ* – that Reality), *Asato mā Sad gamaya* (‘Lead me from the unreal to the Real’),⁴ *Auṃ namaḥ Shivāya* (*Auṃ*, salutation to *Shiva*), *Auṃ namaḥ Rāma* (*Auṃ*, salutation to *Rāma*), and a great many others are all used. *Rāma* and *Hari* are both names of God, and *Auṃ* – regarded as a sacred syllable – is attached to many prayers, *mantras*, and sacred texts.

The *Shiva Saṃhitā* speaks of a secret *mantra*, which it does not mention, but is well known to consist of the syllables *Auṃ*, *aiṃ*, *klīm*, *shrīm*:

Now I will tell you the best practices: the *japa* of a *mantra*. From this, one gains happiness in this world, as well as in the world beyond. By knowing this highest of the *mantras*, the *yogī* certainly attains success (*siddhi*): this gives all power and pleasure to the one-pointed *yogī*.

Shiva Saṃhitā 5:188–89; cf. SSV p.83

Many yogic and tantric texts, while extolling the virtues of *japa*, make exaggerated claims for the efficacy of repeating a *mantra* a particular number of times, or even just once. Such claims are to be understood more as encouragement than fact.

Detailing the “rituals associated with the recitation of *Rāma mantras*”, the *Rāmarahasya* (‘Secret Teachings of *Rāma*’) *Upanishad* describes how a devotee should “bathe three times a day, . . . eat only *sāttvik* foods (e.g. milk, fruits, etc.)”, observe purity and celibacy, relinquish negative emotions, “show respect to all women, . . . sleep on the bare ground, . . . meditate with utmost concentration on *Rāma* as instructed by his teacher”, count his *japa* mentally

using a rosary, repeating the *mantra* 100,000 (one lakh) times, and make offerings of rice pudding and ghee, followed by an offering of flowers accompanied by chanting of the *mūla mantra* (root *mantra*, the primary *mantra* associated with a deity) after every ten rounds of the rosary.⁵ The instructions are given by Hanumān, devotee of Rāma in the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He continues:

The ascetic who does this *japa* becomes liberated in life, and supernatural powers follow him like a bride follows her groom. This *Rāmamantra* is not only a means to liberation, but if you remember me who am Rāma's servant, it will ensure success in these worldly affairs too. To the one who always remembers Rāma with total devotion as the final refuge of the mind, I am empowered to fulfil all their chosen desires.

Rāmārahasya Upanishad 4:18; cf. RUHR

Similar instructions are found in other texts, with variations in the associated rituals, the number of times particular *mantras* should be repeated, the methods used for counting, whether on the fingers or a rosary (a *mālā* or *mālā-japa*), and so on. Traditionally, rosaries have one hundred and eight beads, and are often made from the berries of *rudrāksha* (*Elaeocarpus ganitrus*) or *tulsī* (holy basil, *Ocimum tenuiflorum*).

There are also differing schedules of *japa* related to the various breathing practices of *prāṇāyāma*, and for the opening of particular *chakras*. Varying numbers of repetitions are prescribed for breathing in, holding the breath, and breathing out, different for each of the *chakras*. Some of the tantric texts contain so much detail that one wonders how anyone could ever have remembered it all. Here are some of the simpler instructions from the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, where the *brahmamantra* is “*Auṃ sach-chid-ekaṃ Brahma*,” meaning, ‘*Brahman* is *sat* (truth), *chit* (consciousness), *ekam* (one)’:

After this, while reciting the *mantra* *Auṃ* or the *mūla-mantra*, *prāṇāyāma* should be performed thus: he should close the left nostril with the middle of the fourth finger, and then inhale through the right nostril, meanwhile practising *japa* of the *Prāṇava* (i.e. *Auṃ*) or the *mūla-mantra* eight times. Then, closing the right nostril with the thumb and shutting also the mouth, practise *japa* of the *mantra* thirty-two times. After that gently exhale the breath through the right nostril, while practising *japa* of the *mantra* sixteen times. In the same way, perform these three acts with the left nostril, and then repeat the same process with the right nostril. O adored of the *devas*, I have now told you the method of *prāṇāyāma* to be observed in the use of the *brahmamantra*.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 3:44–48; cf. GLMT pp.42–43

As well as being a part of religious rites and nightly devotions, *mantras* are also used throughout the day, to keep the mind focused:

Let everything which is done, be it worship or sacrifice, bathing, drinking, or eating, be accompanied by the recitation of the *brahmamantra*. When arising at the middle of the fourth quarter of the night, and after bowing to the preceptor who gave initiation into the *brahmamantra*, let it be recited with all recollection. Then obeisance should be made to *Brahman* as aforesaid, after meditating upon Him. These are the enjoined morning rites.

For *purashcharaṇa* (a preparatory rite), O beautiful one, *japa* of the *mantra* should be done 32,000 times; for oblations, 3,200 times; for the presenting or offering of water to the *devatā* (goddess), 320 times; for purification before worship, 32 times; and *brāhmaṇs* (priests) should be feasted 4 times.

In *purashcharaṇa*, no rule need be observed regarding food or concerning what should be accepted or rejected. Nor need an auspicious time or place for performance be selected. Whether the *sādhaka* (practitioner) be fasting or have taken food, whether with or without having bathed, let him, according to his inclination, perform *sādhana* (practice) with this supreme *mantra*. Without trouble or pain – without hymn, amulet, *nyāsa* (placement, a form of meditative visualization), *mudrā* (gesture) or *setu* (explanatory commentary), without the worship of *Gaṇeśha* as the thief – surely and shortly the most supreme *Brahman* will be met face to face.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 3:112–19; cf. GLMT pp.55–56

In another passage advising on the *japa* to accompany *saṃdhyā* (thrice-daily *brāhmaṇ* prayers), the writer continues:

Then, O *devī*, let him make *japa* of the *gāyatrī* (verse) 108 times. Offering the *japa* to the *devatā*, let him make obeisance in the way in which I have spoken. I have now told you of the *saṃdhyā* to be used by him in the *sādhana* of the *brahmamantra*, and by which the worshipper shall become pure of heart. Listen to me now, you who are blessed with grace, to the *gāyatrī*, which destroys all sin.

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 3:107–9; cf. GLMT p.54

The writer then provides details of the *gāyatrī* to be repeated as a *mantra*:

“May we know the supreme Lord (*Parameshvara*);
Let us contemplate the supreme Reality (*Paratattva*);
And may *Brahman* direct us.”

This is the auspicious *brahmagāyatrī* which confers *dharma* (virtue), *artha* (wealth), *kāma* (desires), and *moksha* (liberation).

Mahānirvāṇa Tantra 3:109–11; cf. GLMT p.55

The original *Gāyatrī Mantra*, all but the first line being drawn from the *Ṛig Veda*, reads:

Aum, we meditate on the glory of
that divine Sun (*Savitri*),
who has created this universe –
May He enlighten our minds!⁶

Gāyatrī Mantra, Ṛig Veda 3:62.10

In such tantric texts, the *japa* of *mantras* is recommended for use as much in external, ritualistic contexts as in yogic and more mystical practices, the one often being regarded as a part of the other.

The twentieth-century writer and tantric practitioner Georg Feuerstein summarizes some of the key elements concerning the *japa* of tantric *mantras*:

When a practitioner has received a *mantra* from the mouth of an initiate, he or she can be confident of success in mantric recitation (*japa*), providing of course all the instructions for proper recitation are followed as well. Mindfulness, regularity, and a large number of repetitions of the *mantra* are the three most important requirements. Also, there are certain sacred places where *mantra* practice is considered particularly auspicious. According to the *Kulārṇava Tantra*, *japa* near one's teacher, a *brāhmaṇ*, a cow, a tree, water, or a sacred fire is particularly promising.⁷ . . .

Twenty-one, 108, or 1,008 repetitions are considered auspicious. But for the *mantra* to unlock its potency (*vīrya*), hundreds of thousands of repetitions may be necessary. Once this has occurred, however, even a single pronunciation of the *mantra* will make its power available to the *mantrin* or *japin*, the reciter of *mantras*. In practice, after a while the *mantra* recites itself spontaneously, and its intrinsic power can be felt as a steady charge of energy present in one's body. This is *ajapā japa* or 'unrecited recitation', . . . which is more than the mental 'echo' that occurs when we repeat a word over and over again. It is not simply a mental groove caused by verbal repetition, but a mind-transforming energetic state of being. . . .

Another traditional way of keeping track of the number of repetitions is by counting with one's fingers. Various methods are known, and some are specific to certain *mantras*. It is considered inauspicious to count merely with the tip of one's fingers, and instead

one should, according to the *Mantra-yoga Saṃhitā*,⁸ use the other phalanxes as well. . . .

A *mantra* should be recited with the right intonation, as learned from one's teacher, and also at the proper pace. If, as the *Kulārṇava Tantra* makes clear, it is repeated too fast, there is the danger of disease. If it is recited too slowly, however, it will diminish one's energy. In either case, *japa* will be "useless like water in a broken vessel".⁹ This *tantra* furthermore points out the natural impurities at the onset and the closing of recitation, which must be countermanded by a special mantric practice, namely, by reciting the *mantra*, 7 or 108 times with *Aum* at the beginning and the end.¹⁰

Because *mantras* must be recited numerous times over many hours every day before they can bear fruit, it is easy for a practitioner to get tired. In that case, the scriptures typically recommend shifting from *japa* to meditation. Then again, when the mind is exhausted from meditation, switching back to reciting one's *mantra* can bring renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

Mantras may not only be spoken or mentally recited, but also written out on paper, metal, cloth, or other materials. This technique is known as *likhita-japa*, which, in the words of Swami Shivananda Radha, "brings peace, poise, and strength within".¹¹ The same is of course true of other forms of *japa* as well. As with all yogic practices, the success of *mantra* recitation depends to a large degree on the practitioner's motivation and dedication.

Georg Feuerstein, Tantra, TPEF pp.197, 199–200

Japa, especially mental *japa*, when performed with a spiritual, rather than material motive, will bring some peace of mind or even bliss, depending on the degree of concentration brought to bear and the place where the concentration is fixed. Indian *sants* have taught the mental repetition of particular names, chosen by them, with the attention fixed at the centre between the two eyebrows. The aim is to withdraw the mind and soul currents from the rest of the body and the senses to this point, and to concentrate it to such a degree that all consciousness of the world is lost. Then the mind and soul, in a state of superconsciousness, vacate the body in the same way as they do at the time of death, maintaining just enough connection to leave the body in a state of quiescence.

As high and blissful a state as this may be, this is only a prelude to the real 'repetition'. When the mind and soul are completely withdrawn from the body, they come into contact with the divine Word or the Name of God. Listening to this divine Music is the real remembrance of God, when the soul's attention is fully focused upon Him to the exclusion of all else. This is the true mystic 'repetition' of the Name of God.

In the writings of Indian mystics, *jap* is often twinned with *tap*, since both are outward practices and it makes a convenient rhyme. Literally, *tap* means fire or heat, and thus fervour, ardour, intensity. From this it has come to mean self-discipline and austerities, though it can also mean intense spiritual practice or meditation. Kabīr follows a common refrain among Indian *sants* and mystic devotees when he says that God is not to be found in any outer ritual or practice, neither *jap* nor *tap*. He dwells within the heart and soul of everyone:

Where do you seek me, my friend,
 when I am so near to you?
 I am neither in pilgrimage places (*tīrth*),
 nor in idols nor solitary living!
 I am neither in the temple (*mandir*) nor the mosque (*masjid*),
 neither *Ka'bah* nor *Kailāsh*!
 I am neither in recitation (*jap*) nor austerities (*tap*),
 neither rites nor fasting!
 I dwell not in rituals (*kriyā karm*),
 nor in *yoga* or renunciation (*sanyās*).
 I am neither in the *prāṇa* (subtle life energy),
 nor in the creation (*brahmāṇḍ*) nor heaven (*ākāśh*)!
 Nor am I in inaccessible caves,
 but in the life breath of the living!
 If you seek Me sincerely,
 you will find Me in the twinkling of an eye!
 Says Kabīr, listen dear brothers and holy ones,
 I tell you this in good faith.

*Kabīr, Shabdāvalī, KSS1 (6) pp.90–91,
 SKSM (266) pp.111–12; cf. in SSII pp.168–69*

Many other mystics have said the same. Here, remembrance of the Name of God can refer either to inner contact with the mystic Name (*Nām*), the divine Word, or to deeply focused, internal repetition of a *mantra*, such as *Rām Nām* (Name of God). It is sometimes difficult from a single passage alone to know the meaning that the mystic had in mind, although a study of their other writings may reveal what they understood by the “Name”:

I know nothing of *japa*, I know nothing of *tapa* –
 O *Hari*, destroyer of sorrow –
 I know nothing of fasting and other rituals.
 With your kind glance, erase all my sins,
 O Lord, whose greatness is without limit! ...

When the Name (*Nāma*) alone brings the desired result,
why resort to *homa* (sacrifices), *japa*, and *tapa*?

Purandaradāsa, Parāku mādade 2, Hari Nārāyaṇa 3; cf. in SSI1 pp.204–5, 208–9

The fruit of all spiritual practices is the Name of *Rām* (*Rām Nām*).
You may practise *jap* and *tap*,

but the best practice is repeating the Name (*Nām*).

Mantras chanted mechanically will not save us in the final hours!

The Name (*Nām*) has saved many fallen and lowly sinners!

The Name (*Nām*) is the essence of everything,

it is the support of everything!

Rāmadās says, what can I say?

There is no other path, but repeating the Name (*Nām*).

Samartha Rāmadās, Sakal sādhanānc̥he phal; cf. in SSI5 pp.236–37

Jap can be both external and verbal or internal and entirely in the mind, and mystics have used *jap* for both. Moreover, even in a mystical context, *jap* and its associated verb forms can refer either to the mental repetition of a *mantra* or to the remembrance of God by contact with His mystic Name, His creative power. It is often difficult to know which meaning is intended. Here, verb forms of *dhyāna* (Pu. *dhiān*, contemplation, meditation) are also used.

One who meditates (*japai*) on the Lord twenty-four hours a day –
fruitful and blessed is his coming into the world.

Inwardly and outwardly,

realize that the creator Lord is always with you.

He is your friend, your companion, your very best friend,

who imparts the teachings of the Lord.

Nānak is a sacrifice to one who chants (*japee*) the Name of the Lord. . . .

You shall be saved, O *Nānak*,

by lovingly chanting (*jap*) the Lord's Name.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 298, AGK

He who calls himself a disciple of great true *guru*

should rise early and meditate (*dhiāvai*) on God's Name (*Nām*). . . .

By contemplating (*jāpai*) Lord God's Name (*Har Har Jap*)

under *guru*'s guidance (*updes*),

all his sins, misdeeds and accusations are wiped off. . . .

The *guru*'s disciple, who with every breath and morsel

contemplates (*dhiāe*) over my Lord God,

he becomes pleasing to *guru*'s mind. . . .

Servant Nānak asks for the dust of the feet of that disciple of the *guru*, who himself contemplates (*japai*) on God's Name and makes others contemplate (*japāvai*) thereon.

Guru Rāmdās, Ādi Granth 305–6, AGC

The *sants* maintain that *jap* and *tap* do not bring liberation of the soul:

O Nānak, forsaking the Name (*Nām*),
he loses everything in this world and the next.
Jap, *tap* and *sanjam* (self-mortification) are all wasted:
he is deceived by the love of duality.

Guru Amardās, Ādi Granth 648, AGK

You have practised *jap*, *tap* and *yoga*,
but you have not sought the Word.

Kabīr, Akhrāvātī, Chaupāī 2:4, KSA p.3

I am filthy, hard-hearted, deceitful, and obsessed with sexual desire:
please carry me across, as You wish, O my Lord and Master.
You are all-powerful and potent to grant sanctuary:
exerting Your Power, You protect us.

Jāp, *tāp* and *sanjam*, fasting and purification:
salvation does not come by any of these means.
Please lift me up and out of this deep, dark ditch;
O God, please bless Nānak with Your glance of grace.

Guru Arjun, Ādi Granth 1301, AGK

Mystics who have followed the path of *yoga* have generally understood *japa* to be the repetition of a *mantra* of a name of God. Such *japa* is understood as an aid to concentration, not an end in itself. Ramakrishna thus regards *japa* as a practice with limitations:

All observances fall away after *samādhi* (absorption). Observances such as *pūjā* (outer worship), *japa* and all other worldly activities fall away. In the beginning, one is overactive with *karmas* (observances), but as a man advances towards the Lord, the display of *karmas* becomes less – so much so that even singing of His names and glories ceases.

Ramakrishna, in Kathāmṛita 1:3.6; cf. SRK1

Japa is sitting quietly in solitude, and repeating His name. Repeating His name with a concentrated mind – performing *japa* – one gets the vision of God's form and realizes Him. Think of a chain tied to a

wooden log submerged in the Ganges, its other end fixed to the bank. Proceeding along each link of this chain, you enter the water and eventually reach the log. In the same way, by repeating God's name, you become absorbed in Him and realize Him. . . .

Japa is higher than worship (*pūjā*), and meditation (*dhyān*) is higher than repetition (*japa*) of the name. Higher than meditation is ecstasy (*bhāva*, intense love, *i.e.* *samādhi*).

Ramakrishna, in Kathāmṛita 4:28.1, 4:21.5, SRK4

Practise repetition (*jap*) of Lord's Name (*Nij Nām*):

with that you will reach the true region (*sat lok*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 16:3.9, SBP p.131

Comparable practices are found in the Buddhist and Jain traditions, especially tantric Buddhism, which arose at more or less the same time as Hindu tantrism, and by which it was significantly influenced. Hindu and Buddhist tantric texts share many common features. According to the twenty-ninth chapter of the Buddhist text the *Mañjushrī-mūlakalpa*, the Buddha entrusted a *mantra* to the celestial *bodhisattva* Mañjushrī, to be used when Buddhist teaching is in decline. This *mantra* (*Auṃ vākyeda namaḥ*) is still used in Tibetan Buddhism today. Having described all the preliminary rites, the chapter concludes:

Erecting a small platform made of unclaimed debris, and covering it with scattered flowers, he should recite the *mantra* 108 times. Then, he should recite a book of the good teaching. Within a month, he will become one possessed of superior intelligence. Having made 108 measurements of yellow pigment, he should fashion a mark on his forehead. He will become one who is dear to everybody. Having made a crown consecrated with seven recitations of the *mantra*, unassailable among all people, he should offer a garland of *kiri* (*Paulownia tomentosa*, princess tree) 10,000 times. Then he will become one who is free of every disease.

Day after day, he should perform *japa* seven times. He expiates with certainty that which is known as *karma*. Then, with 108 recitations of the *mantra*, at the time of death, he will see the noble (*bodhisattva*) Mañjushrī, completely, face to face.

Mañjushrī-mūlakalpa 29; cf. in ALSE p.172

See also: **ajapā Jap** (►1), **smaraṇa**.

1. *Haṭha Yoga Pradīpikā* 1:16, *HYPM* p.56.
2. *E.g. Guru Nānak, Ādi Granth* 1291.

3. E.g. *Brahmavidyā Upanishad* 69–80; *Haṃsa Upanishad* 10–13; *Mahāvākya Upanishad* 5–6; *Yogashikhā Upanishad* 1:130–32, *YU* p.352.
4. *Bṛihadāraṇyaka Upanishad* 1:3.27.
5. *Rāmarahasya Upanishad* 4:1–18; cf. *RUHR*.
6. See also *Yajur Veda* 36:3, *Sāma Veda* 6:3.10.
7. *Kulārṇava Tantra* 15:25.
8. *Mantra-yoga Saṃhitā* 75.
9. *Kulārṇava Tantra* 15:55.
10. *Kulārṇava Tantra* 15:57–58.
11. Swami Sivananda Radha, *Mantras*, *MWPS* p.29.

jap(a) yoga (S/H) *Lit.* the *yoga* of repetition (*japa*); the practice of repetition or remembrance; a common feature of practically all forms of *yoga*. See **japa**.

Jesus prayer See **prayer of Jesus**.

jhāna (Pa), **dhyāna** (S) *Lit.* concentration (of mind); from the Sanskrit *dhyāna* (reflection, meditation, concentration, contemplation); in Buddhism, both meditation itself and one or other of the eight stages of meditative absorption; a primary term for meditative absorption used in the Pali *suttas*, which are the oldest Buddhist sources, consisting of discourses and sayings attributed to the Buddha; often used synonymously with *samādhi* (concentration); mentioned throughout Buddhist literature as *jhāna*, *dhyāna* (S), *bsam gtan* (T), *chán* (C), *zen* (J), and the relevant terms in other languages; the fifth of the *bodhisattva*'s six *pāramitās* (perfections) as described in the literature of the later *Mahāyāna* school.

Meditation and contemplation occupy a place in Buddhism unparalleled in any other religious tradition. The avowed goal of Buddhism is enlightenment (S/Pa. *bodhi*) or extinction (S. *nirvāṇa*, Pa. *nibbāna*), and the means of attaining it is meditation. Meditation (as *sammā-samādhi*, right meditation) is the eighth and culminating aspect of the Buddha's noble eightfold path. Images of the Buddha, *bodhisattvas* and other key Buddhist figures are characteristically portrayed in meditation; and, outside of ritualistic worship, meditation is the primary practice in all the various branches of Buddhism. There is no doubt, therefore, concerning the Buddha's emphasis on the contemplative life.

In the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha links meditation to the attainment of wisdom and *nibbāna*:

Meditate (*jhāya*), O monk (*bhikkhu*) – be not heedless,
do not let your mind get into a spin over sensual pleasures.

Do not, for your heedlessness, have to swallow the iron ball (in hell),
so that you have to cry out, as you burn, “This is suffering!”

There is no meditation (*jhāna*) in one without wisdom (*paññā*),
no wisdom (*paññā*) in one who does not meditate (*ajhāyī*).
He in whom there is both meditation (*jhāna*) and wisdom (*paññā*) –
truly, he is close to *nibbāna*.

Dhammapada 25:12–13

He also says that “even the gods” reverence those who are “devoted to meditation (*jhāna*)”:

Even the gods (*devā*) esteem
those wise ones who are devoted to meditation (*jhāna*),
who delight in the peace of emancipation,
the mindful, perfect *buddhas*.

Dhammapada 14:3

In the Pali texts, *jhāna* is a term for eight stages of meditative concentration or absorption of increasing profundity and refinement, as the practitioner leaves *kāmaloka* (realm of desire: the nether worlds, this world, and the lower heavens), and passes through the subtler *rūpaloka* (realm of forms, patterns, or archetypes) and the even finer and more subtle *arūpaloka* (formless realm).

Modern *Theravāda* Buddhism treats meditation (*jhāna* or *bhāvanā*) as falling into two broad categories: tranquillity meditation (*samatha-jhāna*, *samatha bhāvanā*, or *samatha-kammaṭṭhāna*), which develops tranquillity (*samatha*) and aims at concentration; and insight meditation (*vipassanā-jhāna*, *vipassanā bhāvanā*), which develops insight into the true nature of reality through direct experience or perception. Modern Buddhist schools also associate *vipassanā* (clear seeing, insight) with techniques for attaining mindfulness, although that is not the original meaning of *vipassanā*.

In tranquillity meditation, the practitioner focuses on a particular object or theme (a *kammaṭṭhāna*). Insight meditation is a detached contemplation of the flux of experience aimed at penetrating the essential nature of physical and mental phenomena, as defined by their three characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and no abiding self (*anattā*). According to the philosophy, it is insight that dispels ignorance, leads to enlightenment, and releases the practitioner from the bondage of mundane existence. But because of its contribution to clarity of understanding, tranquillity meditation is understood as a preparation for attaining insight.

Nonetheless, the term used for meditation in the Pali *suttas* (discourses) is *jhāna* or a verb form such as *jhāyati* (meditates) or *jhāya* (meditate), with *vipassanā* and *samatha* described as qualities developed through spiritual

practice, and essential for the elimination of impurities. The American monk Thanissaro Bhikkhu (*b.* 1949) comments:

If you look directly at the Pali discourses – the earliest extant sources for our knowledge of the Buddha’s teachings – you’ll find that although they do use the word *samatha* to mean tranquillity and *vipassanā* to mean clear seeing, they otherwise confirm none of the received wisdom about these terms. Only rarely do they make use of the word *vipassanā* – a sharp contrast to their frequent use of the word *jhāna*. When they depict the Buddha telling his disciples to go meditate, they never quote him as saying “go do *vipassanā*,” but always “go do *jhāna*.” And they never equate the word *vipassanā* with any mindfulness techniques. In the few instances where they do mention *vipassanā*, they almost always pair it with *samatha* – not as two alternative methods, but as two qualities of mind that a person may ‘gain’ or ‘be endowed with’, and that should be developed together.¹

Thanissaro Bhikkhu, “One Tool Among Many,” in *NSBP* p.33

Another common misconception concerning *jhāna* is expressed in its translation as ‘trance’. This is misleading, and a rendering generally used by those who have not experienced true meditation. Trance is a semi-conscious or completely unconscious state in which a person is unaware or seemingly unaware of the material environment. It is often accompanied by loss of voluntary movement, rigidity, and lack of response to external stimuli. Commonly used examples of trance states are hypnosis and the ‘possession’ of a medium by a non-physical ‘entity’. Neither of these states, however, resemble the state of higher consciousness experienced in meditation. Looked at from the outside, those whose consciousness is withdrawn from the world may appear to others to be in a ‘trance’, but within themselves they are far from being unconscious. Their mind is increasingly under their control, and their state is better described as one of superconsciousness.

According to Buddhist descriptions, the cosmos consists of three main realms, divided into thirty-one sub-realms or worlds. The purpose of attaining the *jhānas* (understood in this context as one or other of the eight stages of meditative absorption) is to rise up steadily through these realms and go beyond them, to reach final wisdom or enlightenment (*bodhi*), also known as *nibbāna* (extinction). These three worlds are: the realm of sense desire (*kāmaloka*), which includes eleven sub-realms; the realm of subtle forms, archetypes, or patterns (*rūpaloka*, *rūpa-dhātu*), comprised of sixteen realms; and the formless or immaterial realm (*arūpaloka*, *arūpa-dhātu*), which is divided into four sub-realms, making thirty-one realms in all.

The lowest, *kāmaloka*, is the realm of gross and semi-subtle matter, in which sensual desires predominate, and which consists of worlds ranging from those of suffering, such as the hells, to various lower heavens. The human

world is understood to be located more or less in the middle of *kāmaloka*. This is of particular significance, since it is from here that the journey to enlightenment becomes possible. The denizens of the realms below are in too much suffering and those above in too much bliss to make the required effort.

In the realm of subtle forms (*rūpaloka*), the grosser or denser type of matter is absent. This is the region of *brahmās* and *devas*, classes of beings and deities who, though not almighty and eternal, have a power and luminosity superior to that of the inhabitants of *kāmaloka*. The realms of *rūpaloka* are the subtle realms relating to the levels of consciousness attained in the four *jhānas*. Those who have experienced these four *jhānas* have entered these regions.

The third realm of being is the formless realm (*arūpaloka*), beyond gross or subtle matter, where only energies and processes of consciousness exist. This realm has four planes corresponding to the four higher absorptions (*arūpa-jhānas*), which in the analytical *Abhidhamma* and associated literature are given the same names as the realms. The Pali *suttas* themselves speak only of the four *jhānas* and the four immaterial states. In the *suttas*, the latter are not called *jhānas*.

The four formless or immaterial realms (*arūpāyatana*s) are: the realm of boundless space (*ākāśānañcāyatana*); the realm of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇaṇcāyatana*); the realm of no-thingness (*ākīṇcaṇṇāyatana*); and the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*). These four higher realms are taken as the objects of meditation for attaining the four higher *jhānas*.

According to the thirty-one realms cosmology, three sub-realms are allocated to each of the first three *jhānas*. In the fourth *jhāna* there are seven sub-realms, the upper five of which are accessible only to *arahantas* (enlightened ones) and *anāgāmit*s (non-returners, who have escaped rebirth). In Western terminology, *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* correspond to the astral and higher worlds.

In these higher realms, knowledge of past births is acquired, and the workings of the lower levels of existence come to be fully understood. In a discourse describing how he attained enlightenment, the Buddha describes his progress through the first four *jhānas*, following which he travels further within. In the process, he acquires knowledge of his own past lives, sees with the divine eye how all beings are endlessly taking birth and dying, and comes to know the origin of suffering and impurity and the way to bring them to an end.² This is the kind of knowledge or gnosis that is acquired when traversing the four levels of *arūpaloka*.

All these realms, however, are impermanent and lie within the sphere of *saññā* (cognition, knowing, or subtle mental activity), and the final goal is not located in any of these. The only way to put an end to the otherwise unending wandering in the material and higher realms is attainment of *nibbāna*, a state or stage that transcends both the *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms.

The four lower *jhānas* mentioned in the Pali *suttas* are states of deep meditative concentration in which the mind becomes absorbed in its object of focus.

This practice begins with the seeker acquiring faith and following his teacher into homelessness, purifying his conduct, and overcoming the fivefold activity of the senses and the five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇa*). The five hindrances are: sensory desire through the five senses; ill will of any kind; sloth and torpor; restlessness; and doubt or lack of conviction. Bhikkhu Khantipalo (b.1932), who spent thirty years as a *Theravāda* monk before disrobing in order to pursue enquiries into other Buddhist schools and practices, writes:

The usual mental states which are called five-door (five-senses) consciousness together with the reflection upon the input received, tie one to the *kāma*-world, the states of existence based on sensual experience... Sensuality is forever tied up with *dukkha* (suffering), so the meditator, recognizing this, tries to transcend the five-door consciousness and the discursive, thought-filled mind. When the five hindrances all disappear, another type of mind will be known which does not depend on continual stimulation for happiness.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.51

Progress through the *jhānas*, each more refined than its predecessor, is described in several *suttas*, including the *Mahā Assapura Sutta*:

Having abandoned these five hindrances (*pañca-nīvaraṇa*), imperfections of the mind that weaken wisdom, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, and secluded from unwholesome (*akusala*) states, a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the first *jhāna*. This is accompanied by initial and sustained thought (*vitakka-vicāra*), together with the rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) of seclusion....

Just as a skilled bath man or a bath man's apprentice heaps bath powder in a metal basin and, sprinkling it gradually with water, kneads it until the moisture wets his ball of bath powder, soaks it and pervades it inside and out, though the ball itself does not become liquid; so too, a *bhikkhu* makes the rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) born of seclusion drench, steep, fill and pervade this body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by the rapture and bliss born of seclusion.

Majjhima Nikāya 39, Mahā Assapura Sutta, PTSM1 p.276; cf. MDBB pp.367–68

When a monk enters the first *jhāna*, the five hindrances have been at least temporarily suppressed. He now has to work through five factors (*jhānaṅgas*) that lead him through the four *jhānas*. These factors are: *vitakka* (initial application of thought); *vicāra* (sustained application of thought); joy or rapture (*pīti*); bliss (*sukha*); and finally *ekaggatā* (one-pointedness).

Vitakka is the formation of a thought, the beginning of a thought process, the initial directing of the mind towards something; *vicāra* is sustained thought, rumination upon, and further consideration of that something.

These two terms are also rendered as “thinking and pondering”³ or “reflection and discursive thinking”. While these translations may be correct in a general context, the meaning implied here is technical and specific. *Vitakka* is understood as the application of the concentration required to enter into the first *jhāna*. *Vicāra* is further, sustained concentration.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo provides a precise description of the five *jhānangas*:

Initial application (*vitakka*) means the fine, constant effort to keep the mind pointed at the meditation subject. This effort must not be too strong, otherwise the subtle balance of mind will be disturbed. It is compared to the repeated soft notes struck on a gong. Although in other contexts *vitakka* can mean ‘thinking’, it is misleading to translate it in this way (when it is understood as one of the *jhānangas*). ‘Thinking’, the stream of words and pictures we usually call mind, is quietened long before *jhāna* is experienced. A meditator can have a wordless and concentrated mind, but not be in *jhāna* yet, so the translation ‘initial application’ is much to be preferred.

The next factor, sustained application (*vicāra*), follows on from the first. It is the sustained direction of mind when concentration is complete. The commentaries (on the Pali *suttas*) compare it to the reverberations of the gong which continue for some time after it has been struck. It could be compared to the impetus that a model car has when pushed over a smooth surface, the initial push being the previous factor. ‘Sustained application’ has also the sense of exploration or continued examination though we should remember that this is done without words. It is certainly very wrong to translate this as ‘discursive thinking’, as some authors have done.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK pp.52–53

Pīti (rapture) and *sukha* (bliss) are feelings born in the state of seclusion and solitude. The nature of the “seclusion” from which this state arises is both outer and inner. The inner peace arising from external solitude is likely to be temporary, the mind being disturbed by outer circumstances when the period of solitude is over. Inner “seclusion” is to detach oneself from the world, inwardly or mentally. Bhikkhu Khantipalo continues:

Pīti or ‘rapture’ is another word which defies translation. Its nature is most easily understood from its physical manifestations, though in *jhāna* these are very refined. In ordinary mental states it is quite common to experience something of rapture, especially the first kind – ‘minor rapture’, defined as able to raise the hairs on the body. ‘Momentary rapture’ is compared to lightning flashes in different parts of the body and lasting only a brief time. But with ‘overflowing rapture’ there is a repeated swell or flow so that the body feels as though

waves were breaking again and again. The fourth variety, ‘uplifting rapture’, can actually cause the body to lift off the ground. The body of one who experiences this rapture feels like a feather and has lost the earthy weightiness usually associated with the physical body. It can indeed float or fly, but this is merely a by-product of meditation development and should not sidetrack efforts to attain *jhāna*.

The last aspect of rapture is called ‘pervading’, as when a great mountain cave is suddenly filled with a huge flood of water. This is the aspect of rapture found in the first *jhāna*. Though rapture has been illustrated by what it does to the body, yet it is a mental factor and one which continues on from sustained application (of thought), for its gradual strengthening means that interest becomes stronger and the direction of the mind has greater impetus towards one-pointedness. . . .

Bliss (*sukha*) is more refined than rapture and definitely an extension, in a subtle way, of happy feeling. But this happiness is so fine due to the purity of mind that it cannot be imagined by those who have not meditated. It furthers concentration and, because of its wonderful blissfulness, leads the meditator to continue efforts to one-pointedness.

This last factor (*ekaggatā*) is the bringing of all the mind’s power together, the complete focusing of the mind to only one point – the meditation subject which is constantly the mind’s object. (Here though, it is difficult to talk of subject and object, for the mind in *jhāna* becomes the subject – lovingkindness, mindfulness with breathing or whatever has been used to develop meditation). The mind however, does need such one-pointed attention, otherwise no meditation will be developed, let alone a *jhāna* experience.

These five factors found in the first *jhāna* can of course be experienced by a meditator long before *jhāna*. But in that case they are isolated from each other or not in balance. They have to be carefully cultivated and harmonized so that one leads on to the production of the next until, when they are complete, *jhāna* is experienced.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.53

The Venerable Sujiva also explains the nature of the *jhānangas*:

For these types of absorption there are four *rūpa-jhānas*, that means there are four levels and each is different in character. In the *suttas*, it is very clearly said that they differ in terms of *jhāna* factors, called *jhānangas*. These are *cetasikas*, certain states of mind that are present and which play an important part in the respective *jhāna* (absorption). For example, in the first *jhāna* the factors involved are: *vitakka*, *vicāra*, *pīti*, *sukha*, *ekaggatā*. *Vitakka* is ‘initial application’. Initial application is the force of the mind which brings it to the object (focus of

meditation). This is a mental force. *Vicāra*, sustained application, is the force of the mind that is keeping it on the object, and is again a mental force, something like an energy. *Pīti* is joy or interest. *Sukha* is a very happy feeling. And *ekaggatā* is one-pointedness, which means when the mind is as if one with the object. These mental factors, which are all present in the first *jhāna*, play an important part.

But it does not mean that when you have these five factors you have the first *jhāna*. Even if you don't have any concentration, these five mental factors are already there. When you think of food, when you miss your food very much or your Penang *laksa* (spicy-sour noodles in fish sauce), the five factors are also present. The mind keeps running to the *laksa*, and it goes on thinking, "How nice if I were to have *laksa*;" and after that, when you think of the *laksa*, you have joy, "When I had *laksa* it was so nice, I was enjoying myself," and you feel very happy also and it is actually as if you could taste the *laksa* in your mind. So these five factors are all there, but it is more like wrong concentration, *i.e.* greed.

You must know what the five *jhāna* factors are to understand the *jhānas*. . . . When you know what factors are present you know what *jhāna* you are in. For example, in the first *jhāna* you have all the five factors involved. In the second *jhāna*, you don't have the initial and sustained application, you have only joy, happiness and one-pointedness. In the third *jhāna*, you have only happiness and one-pointedness. In the fourth *jhāna*, you have only equanimity and one-pointedness.

Venerable Sujiva, Access and Fixed Concentration; cf. AFCS

Returning to the description in the *suttas*, upon which later teachers and commentators have based their descriptions, attainment of the second *jhāna* implies that the effort of initial and sustained concentration is stilled, and the "rapture and bliss born of concentration" come to pervade the practitioner's being. Inner "concentration" is a more advanced state than that of inner "seclusion". Here, *ekodibhāva* is synonymous with *ekaggatā*:

With the stilling of initial and sustained thought (*vitakka-vicāra*), a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the second *jhāna*, which has inner tranquillity and one-pointedness (*ekodibhāva*) of mind without initial and sustained thought, but with the rapture (*pīti*) and bliss (*sukha*) born of concentration (*samādhi*). . . .

Just as though there were a lake whose waters welled up from below, having no inflow from east, west, north or south, nor yet replenished from time to time by showers of rain, then the cool fount of water welling up in the lake would result in no part of the whole lake remaining unpervaded by cool water; so too, a *bhikkhu* makes

the rapture and bliss born of concentration drench, steep, fill and pervade throughout the body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by it.

Majjhima Nikāya 39, Mahā Assapura Sutta, PTSM1 pp.276–77; cf. CIMK p.51, MDBB p.368

Bhikkhu Khantipalo observes that “rapture and bliss” arise automatically when the mind becomes concentrated and the early striving for concentration is stilled:

Progress to the second *jhāna* means relinquishing those factors which are grossest in the first. Initial and sustained application, which are essential for the latter, must be calmed down for the second *jhāna* to occur. . . . The experience of rapture and bliss arises due to its (the mind’s) purity and concentration. It does not wander. It has one subject continually. And its emotional content is not the desire/aversion basis of sensual experience, but lovingkindness and compassion for all beings. . . . In the second *jhāna*, where rapture and bliss are born of concentration, they are more subtle than in the first, where they arise from the seclusion of the mind which has no hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*).

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK pp.51, 54

In the third *jhāna*, rapture is shed with only bliss remaining. It can be seen that the process of passing through the *jhānas* is a process in which the mind is increasingly stilled. Rapture, however delightful, still involves a deep excitement. When this is stilled, only the bliss remains. The *Mahā Assapura Sutta* continues:

With the further fading away of rapture, a *bhikkhu* abides in equanimity (*upekkhā*); and mindful (*sata*) and fully aware (*sampajāna*), still feeling bliss within the body, he enters upon and abides in the third *jhāna*, on account of which noble ones announce: “He has a blissful abiding who has equanimity and is mindful.”

Majjhima Nikāya 39, Mahā Assapura Sutta, PTSM1 p.277; cf. CIMK p.54, MDBB p.368

Bhikkhu Khantipalo explains:

As rapture is relinquished, this *jhāna* is more subtle than the second though bliss is still experienced. Many meditators cannot pass beyond the second or third *jhānas* because they become attached to the grosser rapture or the finer bliss. These things are difficult to put aside, especially when they are accompanied by views and visions. . . . This

is a “blissful abiding”, a meditation state of purified happiness where one may stay for longer or shorter periods of time according to one’s development. The water, which in the first *jhāna* simile pervaded the ball of powder, and in the second welled up from below, now covers the meditator completely. He is submerged in bliss.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.55

In the fourth *jhāna*, only equanimity and concentration remain, and by this time the practitioner’s being is pervaded by light:

With the abandoning of pleasure and pain, and with the previous disappearance of happiness and sorrow, a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*, which has neither-pleasure-nor-pain, but is purity of mindfulness (*sati*) arising from equanimity (*upekkhā*). Here he sits with a pure bright mind pervading his body, so that there is no part of his whole body unpervaded by it.

Majjhima Nikāya 39, Mahā Assapura Sutta, PTSM1 p.277;

cf. CIMK p.55, MDBB pp.368–69

Bhikkhu Khantipalo points out that although this is a high degree of purity, nonetheless there is still further to go:

This purity is also known as ‘liberation of the heart’ because one who attains and continues to practise it no longer manifests greed or aversion to others and only has subtle attachments to existence on the *jhāna* levels, that is the worlds of subtle form or *Brahmā*-worlds, or to the formless worlds. Others meeting such a person would rightly hold him to be a saint; but they would be wrong if they took him to be completely liberated; though the heart is liberated of unwholesome desires while practice continues, yet the mind as a whole can still harbour wrong views.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight; cf. CIMK p.55

To summarize briefly, entry into the first *jhāna* implies withdrawal of the attention from sensory perceptions and grossly negative thinking; in the second, the practitioner transcends the initial and sustained thought required for initial concentration; in the third, the experience of rapture and ecstasy subsides, and the meditator enters a state of tranquillity; in the fourth, he rests in internal stillness and one-pointed concentration, his being infused with inner light. The first three *jhānas* are understood as ‘perturbable’, but the fourth is ‘imperturbable’. Of the five mental factors (*jhānanga*, *jhāna* factors) present at the outset, only one-pointed, imperturbable concentration remains in the fourth. Because there are five *jhāna* factors (*jhānangas*), the

Abhidhamma and some later commentators have also spoken of five rather than four *jhānas*, the first *jhāna* being regarded as two states, relating to the transcending of *vitakka* and *vicāra*.

The *suttas* describe various methods of meditation by which entry to the *jhānas* can be attained.⁴ These include: concentration on *kaṣiṇas* (physical objects and derived mental images of them); mindfulness of the body; and mindfulness of breathing (*ānāpānasati*), a technique that has been popular in Buddhism since earliest times. Forty themes and objects (*kammaṭṭhānas*) of meditation are generally listed, with further details concerning these techniques appearing in the *Abhidhamma* and related literature. Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* ('Path of Purification'), for instance, describes how these *kammaṭṭhānas* can be utilized for the purpose of approaching or attaining the *jhānas*. Also described as a part of the total process are methods for attaining three preliminary degrees of concentration, which are first mentioned in the *Abhidhamma*. These are: preparatory concentration (*parikamma samādhi*); which is followed by threshold, neighbourhood or access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*); which leads to attainment or fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and entry into the first *jhāna*.

The various discourses attributed to the Buddha make clear that the four *jhānas* are not *nibbāna*,⁵ but only stages on the way. The four *rūpa-jhānas* are still in the realm of forms (*rūpaloka*), and the aspirant has still to go higher and progress through the four higher *arūpa-jhānas* of the formless realm (*arūpaloka*). Here, the subtle mental forms of the four lower *jhānas* are transcended, and the focus of concentration is progressively replaced by awareness of the four extremely fine and subtle realms of *arūpaloka*. These more advanced *jhānas* – which are stages, realms, or levels of higher mind and consciousness – are entered after transcending the fourth of the lower *jhānas*, which is the highest *jhāna* in *rūpaloka*.

According to the *Abhidhamma*, the means of attaining the four higher *jhānas* is – while remaining focused in a *jhāna* below – to concentrate on the meaning of the name of the particular *jhāna* or sub-realm of *arūpaloka*. Thus, to enter the realm of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*), the practitioner concentrates on thinking, "Consciousness is boundless (*viññāṇa ananta*)," until he directly realizes what the assertion means.⁶ Various elaborations and extensions of such practices are also described, for instance:

To one who practises concentration on space abstracted from any *kaṣiṇa* excluding the *ākāsa kaṣiṇa*, thinking, "This is boundless," there arises the first *arūpa-jhāna*. To one who practises concentration on that very first *arūpa-jhāna*, thinking, "It is boundless," there arises the second *arūpa-jhāna*. To one who practises concentration on the nonexistence of the first *arūpa-consciousness*, thinking, "There is

nothing whatever,” there arises the third *arūpa-jhāna*. To him who practises concentration on the third *arūpa*-consciousness, thinking, “It is calm, it is sublime,” there arises the fourth *arūpa-jhāna*.

Anuruddha, Abhidhammattha Sangaha 9:5; cf. ASAM p.439

Ascent through the four higher *jhānas* of *arūpaloka* is characterized by increasing refinement and subtlety of what the Pali texts call *saññā* (S. *saṃjñā*, clear knowing). Like many of the Pali terms that describe the stages of meditation and consciousness, there is no single English word that adequately conveys the meaning of *saññā*, but it has been rendered as ‘cognition’, ‘knowing’, ‘perception’, ‘recognition’, ‘reflection’, and so forth. *Saññā* refers to the fundamental processes or faculties that are involved in grasping and perceiving the qualities and characteristics of something. This includes the faculty of recognition – of remembering something when it is re-encountered. *Saññā* is thus mind function, subtle and gross, and includes perception, memory, knowing, thinking, and so on. The Pali *suttas* use the term in descriptions of the ascent through the stages of consciousness in *arūpaloka*:

Secluded from sensual pleasures, ... from reflection and discursive thinking, ... from rapture and pleasure and pain ... a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the fourth *jhāna*. ... But that too, I say is not enough. Abandon it, I say; transcend it, I say. And what transcends it? ...

With the complete transcending of perceptions of form, with the disappearance of perceptions of sensory impact, giving no attention to perceptions of diversity and aware that ‘space (*ākāsa*) is boundless,’ a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the realm of boundless space. That transcends it. But that too, I say, is not enough. Abandon it, I say; transcend it, I say. And what transcends it? ...

By completely transcending the realm of boundless space and aware that ‘consciousness (*viññāṇa*) is boundless,’ a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the realm of boundless consciousness. That transcends it. ... *etc.*

By completely transcending the realm of boundless consciousness and aware that ‘there is no-thingness (*ākāṇcañña*)’, a *bhikkhu* enters and abides in the realm of no-thingness. That transcends it. ... *etc.*

By completely transcending the realm of no-thingness, a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*). That transcends it. ... *etc.*

By completely transcending the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing, a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in cessation of knowing and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). That transcends it. Thus I speak of the abandoning even of the realm of neither-knowing-

nor-not-knowing. Do you see ... any fetter, small or great, of whose abandoning I do not speak?

Majjhima Nikāya 66, Laṭṭukikopama Sutta, PTSM1 pp.455–56; cf. MDBB pp.558–59

All eight *jhānas* are regarded as being within the realms of knowing or cognition (*saññā*) of things that lie within *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*. With the eighth *jhāna*, the contemplative is said to have reached the limit of knowing, gross or subtle. To attain enlightenment (*bodhi*), liberation (*vimutti*) and *nibbāna*, he must achieve cessation or complete control (*nirodha*) of all sensory and mental activity, however fine or subtle. As he progresses through the *jhānas*, both *rūpa* and *arūpa*, he develops increasing control over the activity of his mind and senses, but there is always further to go, always a greater degree of control to be exercised. Although the Buddha does not use the term *jhāna* for the four higher, *arūpa-jhānas*, he nonetheless provides an overview of the entire process of passing through the eight *jhānas*, following which complete cessation of knowing (*abhi-saññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti*) and mind function is attained. *Abhi-saññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti* refers to the state of consciousness in which all mental function has ceased:

From the moment a monk gains this controlled knowing (*saññā*), he proceeds from stage to stage till he reaches the limit of knowing (*saññā*). When he has reached the limit of knowing (*saññā*), it occurs to him: “Mental activity is worse for me, lack of mental activity is better. If I were to think and imagine, these knowings (*saññā*) (that I have attained) would cease, and coarser knowings (*saññā*) would arise in me. Suppose I were not to think or imagine?” So he neither thinks nor imagines. And then, in him, only these knowings (*saññā*) arise, while other, coarser knowings (*saññā*) do not arise. And so he attains cessation. And that ... is the way by which attainment of the fully aware, ultimate cessation of knowing (*abhi-saññā-nirodha-sampajāna-samāpatti*) comes about by successive steps (*anupubba*).

Dīgha Nikāya 9, Poṭṭhapāda Sutta, PTSD1 p.184; cf. TBLD pp.162–63

In this context, cessation (*nirodha*) is synonymous with *nibbāna* (extinction, enlightenment). As the Buddha says in another discourse, this “cessation” is the “consummation and perfection of direct knowledge”:

By completely transcending the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*), one enters upon and abides in the cessation of knowing and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*)... And it is there that many disciples of mine abide, having reached the consummation and perfection of direct knowledge (*abhiññā*).

Majjhima Nikāya 77, Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta, PTSM2 p.13; cf. MDBB p.639

When the meditator achieves cessation of all mental activity – even the fine or subtle mental activity or knowing (*saññā*) that exists in the *rūpa* and *arūpa* realms – his impurities are destroyed and he not only goes beyond attachment to the world, but also beyond the range or realm of *Māra* (‘Death’, the Evil One), the Buddhist personification of death:

Again, by completely transcending the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*), a *bhikkhu* enters upon and abides in the cessation of knowing and feeling (*saññā-vedayita-nirodha*). And his impurities (*āsavas*) are destroyed by his seeing with gnosis (*paññā*). This *bhikkhu* is said to have blindfolded *Māra*, to have become invisible to the Evil One (*Pāpimantu*) by depriving *Māra*’s eye of its opportunity, and to have crossed beyond attachment to the world (*loka*). He walks without fear, stands without fear, sits without fear, lies down without fear. Why is that? Because he is out of the domain of the Evil One (*Pāpimantu*).

Majjhima Nikāya 26, *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*, PTSM1 p.175; cf. MDBB p.268

Since *saññā*, as cognition, perception, memory, knowing, thinking and so on, includes all the basic, gross and subtle functions of the mind and consciousness that exist in *kāmaloka*, *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka*, the Buddha is saying that to go beyond the domain of *Māra* is to go beyond the realms or the influence of the mind in all its aspects, lower and higher.

The *suttas* trace only a broad outline of the spiritual path that leads from this world, through *rūpaloka* and *arūpaloka* to *nibbāna*. Little detail is given of the nature of these worlds or of the characteristics of the mind in these exalted states of consciousness. This is not out of secrecy but simply because these realms cannot be described in human terms, and any attempt to do so is apt to be misleading or to be easily misunderstood. Some commentators, for example, ancient as well as modern, have tried to understand *jhāna* as a psychological state within the sphere of commonly known human mental function. *Bhikkhu Khantipalo* points out that a more subtle and finer mind is present in *jhāna*. The lower, human mind that deals with the world of the five senses has been transcended. He observes:

The sort of mind which has been described ... is called *jhāna*, ... and it gives access to other planes of existence called the *Brahmā*-world (*rūpaloka*), the refined heavens of subtle form. This is not the place to say much about them and even the Buddha has left hardly any descriptions of them. No doubt the trouble is that words are inadequate for this purpose. Even his descriptions of *jhāna* are brief and limited to a list of psychological factors, illuminated on a few occasions by similes.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, *Calm and Insight*, CIMK p.51

Bhikkhu Khantipalo points out that experiences of these higher *jhānas* are not the sole province of Buddhists. Such experiences can also be very easily misunderstood and even taken as the “ultimate goal”:

No words were used by the Buddha to elaborate upon them, presumably because they are so far beyond the range of words. Some meditators from all religions having mystical traditions experience them and, as with the four *jhānas*, may be misled by their interpretation of them. However, the Buddha encourages one to see them as conditioned states and not as the ultimate goal. Meditators who lack good advice might take, for instance, the infinity of space experience to be voidness and imagine therefore that they had arrived at the ultimate truth of not-self.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK pp.55–56

It is natural to interpret such experiences in the light of one’s own human belief system and cultural conditioning:

When a person emerges from *jhāna* the first time, his view of what has happened will depend to some extent on what he has been conditioned to believe. The *jhāna*-experience is so different from the usual states of wholesome and unwholesome ‘minds’ that a meditator with a theistic background could easily identify the bliss, rapture, and sense of oneness – with God or with his true self or soul. Ordinarily he knows his own mind as varying between wholesome, unwholesome, and neutral states – that is what he identifies as being ‘himself’, so then if he should experience totally purified consciousness, it is easy to label that as ‘not-self, but the gift of Another’ and then fit the experience into the terms of a theology already held to be true.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.56

Bhikkhu Khantipalo himself sees such experiences through the lens of Buddhist philosophy:

A Buddhist is careful not to do this. He knows that whatever arises – bliss, rapture, ‘oneness’ or visions – does so because of supporting conditions, continues while those conditions give support, and passes away with the changing of those conditions. This applies to everything contained in the five aggregates (*khandhas*) which is the totality of oneself. He knows too that mind-heart is capable of a much wider range of experience than that perceived through the five sense doors with mind as the sixth (door of perception). All that is experienced should be tested to find out, “Does it arise conditionally?” If it does, then it will pass away too and so cannot be grasped at as ultimate

Reality under any such names as God, soul, self, Godhead, cosmic consciousness, and so on.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.56

The “five aggregates (S. *skandhas*, Pa. *khandhas*)” that he mentions are the five aspects of body and mind that comprise the individuality of a sentient being. They are what human beings regard as their ‘selves’, and according to Buddhist belief, it is this ever-shifting collection of changing and conditioned aggregates that repeatedly reincarnates in the cycle of transmigration (*saṃsāra*).

Bhikkhu Khantipalo also adds that the blissful experiences of the *jhānas* can in themselves become a source of attachment to states that are impermanent. He is speaking of what are known as the imperfections of insight (*vipassanūpakkilesa*), of becoming attached to intermediate stages and experience that are enjoyable and inspiring, but are not states in which to linger:

People who do not practise meditation usually have much attachment to sensual pleasures, but meditators, especially those who experience *jhāna*, can become deeply attached to rapture and bliss even though they have few worldly attachments. When this is the case, no further progress is possible, so meditators are encouraged by the Buddha to reflect upon the conditioned nature of their blissful experience, to see it as impermanent and therefore as subject to deterioration. Whatever has this characteristic is also unreliable and insecure, which is the most subtle aspect of *dukkha* (suffering). Then again, experience which is liable to deteriorate and change, to be unsatisfactory, can scarcely be my self (or soul). In this way, (meditation upon) the three characteristics (impermanence, suffering, and not-self) can be used to break up attachment to even subtle meditation states.

Bhikkhu Khantipalo, Calm and Insight, CIMK p.57

These experiences of higher consciousness are so far beyond all human concepts of God or not-God, self or not-self, soul or not-soul, that they are impossible for the human mind to fathom. These blissful states of consciousness and the higher worlds are not something that can be so easily reasoned away. Who would not like to be truly awake (spiritually) or far more awake than at present? Who would not like to enjoy bliss at all times? How to ‘be’ in such higher states is not something that can be predetermined by human reason. This is why the need for a spiritual master is emphasized not only in Buddhism, but in all spiritual traditions.

As for which region or *jhāna* one has attained, this too can never be ascertained by human reason or by checking the experiences against human descriptions, even those given by enlightened beings.

It is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for individuals to know simply from verbal descriptions where someone else has reached or indeed to know what level they themselves have attained. It is very easy to mistake one stage of consciousness for another, even to imagine oneself to have reached enlightenment when in fact one is still far from such a stage of spiritual development. As the Venerable Sujiva points out:

It is important to have a certain degree of understanding. It is due to a lack of this type of understanding that wrong views can arise. As you will find in the *Brahmajāla Sutta*,⁷ the discourse on wrong views (*micchā-diṭṭhi*), a significant proportion of wrong views do not arise from thinking or from various philosophies; they arise from meditation experiences. Holding on to meditation experiences as something true and good, when in reality they are false, gives rise to many kinds of wrong view. . . . For example, if a person gets attached to *jhāna* as *nibbāna*, then he entertains a wrong view. Of course there is nobody who can argue with him, because he thinks, “I have experienced it and you have not.” Sometimes entering into *jhāna* is as if going into a void and the focus of meditation becomes so subtle that it is very easy to fall into false views if one does not have a proper teacher. Even before entering the blissful absorptions (*jhānas*), one can experience many subtle states which can be misunderstood. . . .

If you cannot, for instance, differentiate between *upacāra samādhi* and *appanā samādhi* (threshold and fixed concentration), it is even easier for you to make a mistake between what is *nibbāna* and what is not *nibbāna*, because *nibbāna* is something more subtle and deeper than *jhāna*. For example, when people are practising meditation and everybody starts saying, “I’ve got first *jhāna*, second *jhāna*, third *jhāna*, fourth *jhāna*, . . .”, we don’t say that they are wrong because we don’t really know what their experiences are, but the fact that they are saying all these things so easily and so happily makes it obvious that there are attachments. And you can see sometimes, when they say it, that they are very proud of it. If they are actually attached to wrong views, it is even worse. . . .

If a person has really gone through all these practices, he will know that it is not easy to know whether somebody has this *jhāna* or that *jhāna*. . . . So one should be very reserved about making such statements. Therefore, if somebody says all these things too freely, we should not say directly that he is wrong; we say to him, be very careful, because you may fall into wrong views.

Venerable Sujiva, Access and Fixed Concentration; cf. AFCS

Although the description of the *jhānas* originated in the *Theravāda* Pali tradition, they prevail to a greater or lesser extent in the various *Mahāyāna*

schools. In the *Mahāyāna* tradition, *dhyāna* or *dhyāna samādhi* is regarded as a fundamental aspect of the *bodhisattva* path. A *bodhisattva* is one who has taken a vow not to enter a state of *nirvāṇa* from which there is no return until all living beings have attained enlightenment and have been liberated from the cycle of birth and death. As a general term for meditation, *dhyāna* is the fifth of the six *pāramitās* (S. perfections) to be practised or attained by a *bodhisattva*. The six *pāramitās* are: generosity (*dāna*), virtuous conduct (*śīla*), patience and forbearance (*kṣānti*), zeal (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*), and wisdom (*prajñā*).

Depending upon the school or the orientation of particular *sūtras*, the kinds of *dhyāna* described generally include the four or eight *dhyānas* that originated with the Pali *jhānas*. *Dhyāna* is variously classified, however, sometimes as more than eight, although the four or eight fundamental *dhyānas* are a common theme. Often, a particular *dhyāna* is associated with a particular sub-realm, sub-heaven or *dhyāna*-heaven in the twenty heavens that comprise *rūpa*- and *arūpaloka*.⁸

See also: **anussati**, **apramāda** (8.1), **bhāvanā**, **dhyāna**, **kasiṇa**, **samatha**, **saññā** (►1), **vasī**, **vipassanā**.

1. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 149 (*Mahāsalāyatanika Sutta*), 151 (*Piṇḍapāta-pārisuddhi Sutta*), *PTSM3* pp.289–90, 297.
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 36, *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*, *PTSM1* pp.247–49.
3. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 19, *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*, *PTSD2* p.116, *MDBB* pp.208–9, *passim*.
4. E.g. *Majjhima Nikāya* 10 (*Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*), 118 (*Ānāpānasati Sutta*), 119 (*Kāyagatāsati Sutta*), *PTSM1* pp.55–63, *PTSM3* pp.78–99; *Dīgha Nikāya* 22, *Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, *PTSD2* pp.290–304.
5. E.g. *Dīgha Nikāya* 1, *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *PTSD1* pp.36–38.
6. See Nārada Mahāthera, on *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* 1:8, *ASAM* pp.77–78.
7. *Dīgha Nikāya* 1, *Brahmajāla Sutta*, *PTSD1* pp.1–46.
8. E.g. *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* 43, *T12 375:826a15–24*, *MMSY* (42) pp.513–14.

jìngshè, jìngshì (C) *Lit.* quiet (*jìng*) room (*shì*), quiet house or hut (*shè*); a peaceful room or hut used for meditation; synonymous with *qīngshè* and *xiánshì*. See **xiánshì**.

jìngzuò (C), **seiza** (J) *Lit.* to sit (*zuò*) still (*jìng*); sitting quietly, quiet sitting; in Confucianism, a technical term for a form of meditation in which the meditator reflects quietly in a formal kneeling position. Originally Chinese, the term is common in Japanese, where it refers to the posture of sitting on one's heels that is used on formal occasions; also a form of *Zen* Buddhist

and *Shintō* meditation. Since the twentieth century, the term *jìngzuò* has become more widely used by modern Daoist writers, notably by master Jiǎng Wéiqiáo (1892–1955), whose particular blend of *nèidān* (inner alchemy) and biomedical thinking is widely regarded as a forerunner of the contemporary *qìgōng* movement.¹ See **dǎzuò**.

1. See Livia Kohn, *Taoist Experience*, TEAK pp.135–41.

jiǔnián (C) *Lit.* nine (*jiǔ*) years (*nián*). In addition to meaning the number nine, *jiǔ* is often used in Chinese symbolism to mean ‘many’ and ‘numerous’. The character for nine (*jiǔ*) is also used interchangeably with another character, rendered in Pinyin as *jiǔ*, which means ‘long’, ‘for a long time’, or ‘for a prolonged period’. In Daoism, *jiǔnián* is an expression for ‘the time required’ to complete the course of spiritual cultivation. Also in Daoism, the number nine carries the meaning of oldest, extreme, or pure *yáng* (*i.e.* positivity, spirituality). The *Yìjīng* (at least C9th BCE), for instance, substitutes the word *jiǔ* (nine) for *yáng* when detailing each of its sixty-four hexagrams. *Jiǔnián* (nine years) is sometimes used synonymously with *jiǔhuán* (nine restorations), a *nèidān* (inner alchemy) term.

As master Liú Yīmíng (1734–1821) explains:

The term ‘nine years (*jiǔnián*)’ does not mean an actual period of nine years (*jiǔnián*). The number nine (*jiǔ*) is used to symbolize pure *yáng*. As in the term ‘nine restorations (*jiǔhuán*)’ of golden liquid, it refers to pure *yáng* (spirituality) after *yīn* (materiality) has been completely removed. As the adage goes: “One cannot become immortal if the slightest bit of *yīn* remains.”

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

The use of *jiǔnián* is best known in connection with the legend of the Buddhist missionary Bodhidharma (C5th or C6th), who meditated in a cave near the Shàolín Temple in northern China for nine years (*jiǔnián*) facing a wall (*miànbì*). As a nominal period of time, *jiǔnián* is more or less synonymous with *shíyuè* (ten months):

The term ‘ten months (*shíyuè*)’ refers to the time required for the spiritual embryo (*shèngtāi*, inherent spiritual potential) to develop and transform, just like the ten (lunar) months of human pregnancy before a baby is born. . . . ‘Ten months incubation (*shíyuè wēnyǎng*)’ and ‘nine years facing a wall (*jiǔnián miànbì*)’ mean the same thing; they are not different things. They are both symbolic representations used by the ancients.

Liú Yīmíng, Bǎizì bēi zhù, ZW257, DS3

Rather than specifying a particular period, ‘nine years’ (and also ‘three years’) signifies a long time, and other adepts are also said to have meditated for nine years before attaining enlightenment. According to the erudite monk Qín Zhì’ān’s thirteenth-century record of the early patriarchs of the *Quánzhēn* school, Wáng Chǔyī (C13th) also practised meditation standing on one leg and facing out to the sea – for “nine years”:

(Wáng Chǔyī) went back and forth between Dèng(zhōu) and Níng(hǎi) (both located on the north coast of the Shāndōng Peninsula). At night he would return to the Cloud Radiance Grotto (located on Mount Chá) where he stood at the entrance on one foot facing the great sea in the east for nine years (*jiǔnián*), not once falling asleep. People called him ‘Mr Iron Leg’. Realized man Qiū (Chǔjī) praised him, saying, “In the summer, he stood facing the sun. In the winter, he slept embracing the snow. He trained his body like this for nine years (*jiǔnián*) and entered into the Great Wonder (*dàmiào*).”

Qín Zhì’ān, Jīnlíán zhèngzōng jì, DZ173 5:2b, in TPEQ p.51

See also: **jiǔhuán** (8.1), **miànbì**.

jñāna-sattva (S), **ye shes sems dpa’** (T) *Lit.* knowledge, wisdom, or awareness (*jñāna, ye shes*) being (*sattva, sems dpa’*); pristine-awareness deity; in later Tibetan tantric Buddhism, the real or true form of the meditation deity (*yi dam*), which merges with the practitioner’s imagined form (*samaya-sattva*). See **samaya-sattva**.

jñāna yoga, jñāna mārga (S), **gyān yog(a), gyān mārg, gyān mat** (H) *Lit.* path (*mārga*), teaching (*mat*), or *yoga* of knowledge (*jñāna, gyān*); the path to union with God through knowledge, its method being to lead those with a developed, reflective bent of mind to God, through intellectual discrimination and knowledge; *Vedānta* philosophy; one of the three forms of *yoga* traditionally mentioned in Indian sacred texts such as the *Bhagavad Gītā*, the other two being *karma yoga* (*yoga* of good deeds and action) and *bhakti yoga* (devotional *yoga*). To these, *rāja yoga* (royal *yoga*, Patañjali’s *yoga, aṣṭāṅga yoga*) is often added as a fourth.

Jñāna can denote knowledge obtained through intellectual activity, *i.e.* scholarship, analysis, reasoning and so on, or it can refer to mystical knowledge or gnosis. *Jñāna yoga* is based on observations in the *Upanishads* such as, “He who knows the supreme *Brahman* becomes *Brahman*.”¹

Among the Indian sacred texts, the *Bhagavad Gītā* considers *karma yoga, jñāna yoga* and *bhakti yoga* to be traditional forms of *yoga*. The *jñāna* of the *Gītā*, however, is not merely scholarship and reasoning: intellectual knowledge

is illumined by gnosis. Some commentators on the *Gītā* have stressed one or another *yoga* as its characteristic teaching. But in fact, seeking to blend and harmonize these paths, the *Gītā* gives importance to all three, each being considered an important part of the whole. As Sri Aurobindo puts it:

The first step is *karma yoga*, the selfless sacrifice of works, and here the *Gītā*'s insistence is on action. The second is *jñāna yoga*, the self-realization and knowledge of the true nature of the self and the world, and here the insistence is on knowledge. But the sacrifice of works continues, and the path of works becomes one with, but does not disappear, into the path of knowledge. The last step is *bhakti yoga*, adoration and the seeking of the supreme Self as the divine Being, and here the insistence is on devotion. But the knowledge is not subordinated, only raised, vitalized, and fulfilled; and still the sacrifice of works continues. The double path becomes the triune way of knowledge, works, and devotion. And the fruit of the sacrifice, the one fruit still placed before the seeker, is attained – union with the divine Being and oneness with the supreme divine Nature.

Sri Aurobindo, Essays on the Gītā, CWA19 p.38

According to the story related in the *Gītā*, Kṛishṇa tells Arjuna that there is a divine and mystical kind of knowledge within by which all else is known:

Hear, O son of Pārtha, how –
 with mind absorbed in and surrendered to Me –
 You will, through the practice of *yoga*,
 undoubtedly come to know Me fully.
 I will now teach you in full
 that knowledge (*jñāna*) and right understanding (*saṁjñāna*),
 knowing which, nothing more will remain for you to know.

Bhagavad Gītā 7:1–2

Even so, in its final emphasis, the *Gītā* regards *bhakti* as the higher path. When Arjuna asks Kṛishṇa:

There are your ever-steadfast devotees
 who love and worship You in the above way
 (as the divine Person);
 And there are others who worship You
 as the imperishable Unmanifest –
 Which of these has the better understanding of *yoga*?

Bhagavad Gītā 12:1

Kṛishṇa replies:

I consider those to be the most perfect in *yoga*
 who, with their minds intently fixed on Me,
 worship Me with complete faith.

Bhagavad Gītā 12:2

Kṛishṇa further explains that those who worship the Unmanifest with senses under control and mind detached, do come to him. But he points out that the path of contemplating the Unmanifest is far more difficult than that of devotion to an incarnate form of God whom human beings can directly experience and love. This is why the *Gītā* ultimately emphasizes *bhakti* rather than *jñāna*:

The obstacles facing those
 devoted to the Unmanifest are far greater;
 For the way of an unmanifest Ideal
 is hard for embodied beings to attain.

But, O son of Pārtha, for those
 whose minds are centred on Me,
 surrendering to Me both the doing
 and the fruits of all their actions,
 taking refuge in Me,
 and meditating on Me with an undivided love –
 I soon become their deliverer
 from the ocean of this world of death.

So fix your mind on Me alone,
 let your conviction be in Me;
 Then, you will live in Me alone forever.
 Of that, there is no doubt.

Bhagavad Gītā 12:5–8

Here, “meditating” is not cogitation on an abstract principle, but one-pointed contemplation on the form of Kṛishṇa as a personification of God.

Jñāna yoga or *jñāna mārga* is the approach of *Vedānta*, in which what is unreal and what is real are intellectually analysed. The unreal is rejected, until only the Real remains. The method requires the keen application of reason, intellect, discrimination and intuition for the attainment of spiritual wisdom. It is an approach of intellectual negation. Swami Vivekananda explains:

(*Jñāna yoga*) is divided into three parts. First, hearing the truth – that the *Ātman* (Self) is the only reality and that everything else is *māyā* (illusion). Second, reasoning upon this philosophy from all points of view. Third, giving up all further argumentation and realizing the Truth. This realization comes from (1) being certain that *Brahman* is real

and everything else is unreal; (2) giving up all desire for enjoyment; (3) controlling the senses and the mind; (4) intense desire to be free. Meditating on this reality always and reminding the soul of its real nature are the only ways in this *yoga*. It is the highest, but most difficult. Many persons get an intellectual grasp of it, but very few attain realization.

Swami Vivekananda, Four Paths of Yoga, CWSV8 pp.154–55

The object of *jñāna yoga* is the same as that of *bhakti* and *rāja yogas*, but the method is different. This is the *yoga* for the strong, for those who are neither mystical nor devotional, but rational. As the *bhakti yogī* works his way to complete oneness with the Supreme through love and devotion, so the *jñāna yogī* forces his way to the realization of God by the power of pure reason. He must be prepared to throw away all old idols, all old beliefs and superstitions, all desire for this world or another, and be determined only to find freedom. Without *jñāna*, liberation cannot be ours. It consists in knowing what we really are, that we are beyond fear, beyond birth, beyond death. The highest good is the realization of the Self. It is beyond sense, beyond thought. The *real* ‘I’ cannot be grasped. It is the eternal Subject, and can never become the object of knowledge because knowledge is only of the related, not of the Absolute. All sense knowledge is limitation, it is an endless chain of cause and effect.

Swami Vivekananda, Discourses on Jñāna Yoga, CWSV8 p.3

He also describes something of the practice itself:

First, meditation should be of a negative nature. Think away everything. Analyse everything that comes in the mind by the sheer action of the will.

Next, assert what we really are – existence, knowledge, and bliss (*sat-chit-ānanda*) – being, knowing, and loving.

Meditation is the means of unification of the subject and object. Meditate: “Above, it is full of me; below, it is full of me; in the middle, it is full of me. I am in all beings, and all beings are in me. *Aum Tat Sat*, I am It. I am existence above mind. I am the one Spirit of the universe. I am neither pleasure nor pain.

“The body drinks, eats, and so on. I am not the body. I am not mind. I am He.

“I am the witness. I look on. When health comes, I am the witness. When disease comes, I am the witness.

“I am existence, knowledge, bliss.

“I am the essence and nectar of knowledge. Through eternity I change not. I am calm, resplendent, and unchanging.”

Swami Vivekananda, Notes on Jñāna Yoga, CWSV6 pp.91–92

Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda's *guru*, explains things in a similar manner, but observes that *jñāna yoga* is very difficult, and hardly a practice for the present age of *kaliyuga* (according to the Indian cosmological understanding):

The *jñānī* wants to know *Brahman* (the Absolute). He says to himself, "Not this, not this."² He reasons, "Only *Brahman* is real and the world unreal." He meditates on what is real and what is unreal. When his reasoning stops, he goes into *samādhi*, and he gains the knowledge of the Absolute.

Ramakrishna, Kathāmṛta 1:11.4, SRK1

You can attain Him by the path of reasoning, by the path of *jñāna yoga*. But this path is very difficult. "I am not the body, nor the mind, nor the intellect, neither disease, nor sorrow, nor restlessness. I am the Self of *sat-chit-ānanda*, beyond pleasure and pain, not subject to the senses" – it is very easy to say all this by the word of mouth. But it is very difficult to practise it, to internalize it. The hand is scratched and pierced by thorns. It is bleeding profusely, yet you say, "Where? My hand is not scratched and pierced by the thorns. I am all right." It is not proper to say so. First you have to burn the thorns in the fire of *jñāna*.

Ramakrishna, Kathāmṛta 1:15.2, SRK1

Jñāna yoga is very difficult. *Jñāna* cannot be attained without riding oneself of the conviction that I am the body. In the *kaliyuga*, life depends on food. The conviction that I am the body, the feeling of I-ness, does not disappear. So, the path of *bhakti yoga* is enjoined for *kaliyuga*. *Bhakti yoga* is an easy path. If you sing His names and glories, and pray to Him longingly from the core of your heart, you will attain *Bhagavān* (God) – there is no doubt about it.

It is like a line drawn on the surface of water rather than placing a bamboo stick on it. You find that the water has been divided into two parts, but this line does not last. The feeling of the 'servant-I', or the 'I of a *bhakta*' or the 'I of a child' is only like a line drawn on water.

Ramakrishna, Kathāmṛta 1:4.6, SRK1

Maharaj Sawan Singh says much the same:

A Vedantist applies the method of elimination. He analyses himself and (by thinking) eliminates the body, mind, *prāṇas*, etc., from (his conception of) himself. By reasoning, he tries to convince himself that he is not the body, nor the *prāṇas* that run the body, nor is he the mind that activates the *prāṇas*. Instead, he thinks that he is the soul (*ātman*) – the real self – that gives life and energy to all these. And

that this self is the supreme Spirit (*Brahman*), the Lord of all creation. “The feeling of an individual soul is absolutely unreal,” the Vedantist says, “I am the world and the creator of the world. I am the great Ocean, and the universe is my waves, tides, and foams. It is due to illusion born of ignorance that man, the Lord, looks upon himself as the slave.”

But it is easy to say, and very difficult to believe (and experience) all this by mere intellectual hair-splitting. Hence the *āchāryas* of a later period, Mādhavāchārya and others, sought the help of Patañjali’s *yoga* (*prāṇāyāma*) to achieve their object. Still later, Gyāneshwar declared that *bhakti* (devotion) was the only means of release. . . .

This *gyān mārg* or the path of the intellect is very difficult and dangerous. Great Gosāin Tulsīdās in his famous epic, the *Rām Charit Mānas*, says, “To follow the path of intellectual reasoning is to walk on the sharp edge of a razor.” Only one out of millions may reach the goal through this path. It is not meant for everybody. A great seer, such as Vyāsa or Rāmānuja or a Shankarāchārya may perhaps succeed.

Maharaj Sawan Singh, in Call of the Great Master, CGM pp.96–97

Having covered the same kind of reasoning, Swami Shiv Dayal Singh summarizes:

For this reason, *gyān* and *yoga* both are discarded,
and saints have upheld love (*bhāv*) and devotion (*bhakti*).

Swami Shiv Dayal Singh, Sār Bachan Poetry 24:1.71, SBP p.204; cf. MSPP p.274

See also: **ashtāṅga yoga**, **bhakti yoga** (►4), **haṭha yoga**, **jñāna** (8.1), **karma yoga** (►4), **kuṇḍalinī yoga**, **prāṇāyāma**, **rāja yoga**.

1. *Muṇḍaka Upanishad* 3:2.9.

2. *Bṛihadāranyaka Upanishad* 2:3.6, 3:9.26, 4:2.4, 4:4.22, 4:5.15.

jog (H/Pu) See **yoga**.

jugti (H/Pu), **jugat** (Pu) See **yukti**.

kalimāt-i qudsīyah (P) *Lit.* sacred (*qudsīyah*) words (*kalimāt*), holy words; the eleven rules or principles of the *Naqshbandīyah* order of Sufis, intended to be borne in mind and used as spiritual exercises; practised, with personalized variations, under the guidance of a *shaykh*; originally formulated as eight principles by the Central Asian Sufi, Khwājah ‘Abd al-Khālīq Ghujduwānī (*d.* 1179), a further three being added by Khwājah Bahā’ al-Dīn Naqshbandī

(d.1389), founder of the *Naqshbandīyah*. Similar exercises are practised by other Sufi orders.

The spiritual practices of the *Naqshbandīyah* were introduced to modern Western audiences by the works of writers such as Idries Shah, John G. Bennett, Omar Ali-Shah, and J. Spencer Trimingham. Although there are variations regarding the order in which they are presented (especially numbers five to eight), the eleven practices are:¹

1. *Hūsh dar dam*. Awareness (*hūsh*) of breathing (*dam*); awareness or consciousness of one's breathing; remaining in remembrance of the divine presence, while inhaling and exhaling in a deep but natural rhythm, without becoming preoccupied with one's breathing.
2. *Naẓar bar qadam*. Eyes (*naẓar*) on (*bar*) footsteps (*qadam*); keeping the attention on one's footsteps, watching over one's steps; maintaining a state of mental vigilance and mindfulness, so as to keep the attention away from the world and focused on the divine presence.
3. *Safar dar waṭan*. Journey (*safar*) to the homeland (*waṭan*); journeying in one's own country, *i.e.* within oneself; moving from blameworthy to praiseworthy qualities; travelling (in consciousness) from the human level to the Divine, requiring purification of the heart.
4. *Khalvat dar anjuman*. Solitude (*khalvat*) in company (*anjuman*); retirement or seclusion when in company; remaining in the divine presence even when in company or in the midst of worldly busy-ness; remaining tranquil and detached from externals, generally with the aid of an inward recitation (*ẓikr*); being in the world but not of it. Even in a busy market, the Sufi should be so internally engrossed in *ẓikr* that he remains mindful of the divine presence.
5. *Yād-kardan*. Doing (*kardan*) remembrance (*yād*); doing recollection, doing repetition; exercises in remembrance; remembering the path one is following, and drawing strength from it; continuous mental or vocalized remembrance of the repetition (*ẓikr*) taught by one's *shaykh* or *pīr*, so that one becomes inwardly aware of the divine presence.
6. *Bāz-gasht*. Turning (*gasht*) back (*bāz*); renewal; restraint, self-control, self-discipline; returning to oneself, turning within; repentance, and a return to righteousness; keeping one's thoughts from straying during spiritual practice.
7. *Nigāh-dāshtan*. Maintaining (*dāshtan*) sight (*nigāh*); watchfulness, vigilance; being vigilant over one's mental content, accepting the positive

and rejecting the negative; being aware of and open to subtle perceptions and intuitions.

8. *Yād-dāshṭan*, *yād-dāshṭ*. Maintaining (*dāshṭan*, *dāshṭ*) remembrance (*yād*); maintaining memory; maintaining awareness of the inner essence of one's own being and existence; permanent awareness of the divine presence.
9. *Wuqūf-i zamānī*. Time-halt (*zamān-wuqūf*); halting time, timely pause, temporal pause; taking time out to examine or assess how one is passing one's time, being thankful for good deeds and seeking forgiveness for wrongdoing; also, suspension of judgments, preconceptions, conditioned thought, and all discursive thinking. *Wuqūf-i zamānī* makes a Sufi aware of how successful he has been in maintaining awareness of the Divine.
10. *Wuqūf-i 'adadī*. Number-halt (*'adad-wuqūf*); numerated pause; remembering or counting the number of times a particular silent repetition (*ẓikr*) has been mentally repeated; a further means of assessing success in the practice of *ẓikr*.
11. *Wuqūf-i qalbī*. Heart-halt (*qalb-wuqūf*); visualization; stilling the mind by visualizing one's heart, perhaps with the word *Allāh* inscribed upon it in Arabic, thereby identifying oneself with the Divine. Khwājah Bahā' al-Dīn Naqshbandī regarded this as more essential than control of the breathing or counting the *ẓikr*.

See also: **dhikr**, **hūsh dar dam**.

1. See Kāshifī, *Rashaḥāt-i 'Ayn al-Ḥayāt*, *RAHK* pp.20–27; Saiyid Rizvi, *A History of Sufism in India*, *HSII* pp.95–97; Idries Shah, *Perfumed Scorpion*, *PSWW* p.86; Omar Ali-Shah, *Rules or Secrets of the Naqshbandi Order*, *RSNO* p.10; T.C. Rastogi, *Islamic Mysticism*, *IMSR* pp.46–47; “Eleven Naqshbandi Principles,” *Wikipedia*, ret. March 2015.

kammaṭṭhāna (Pa) *Lit.* place (*ṭhāna*) of work (*kamma*); basis of action, working ground, focus of activity; used in the Buddhist Pali *suttas* to mean an occupation or activity, such as farmer, merchant, and so on; in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the *suttas*), commentarial literature and later Buddhist texts, a subject of meditation, a meditation exercise; a generic term used for an object, theme or topic that is made the focus of a meditation exercise (*bhāvanā*), by which negative emotions and mental traits such as the ten *kilesas* (defilements, impurities), desire (*taṇhā*) and ignorance (*avijjā*) can

be eliminated, and meditative concentration (*samādhi*) attained; any of the classical forty topics or subjects for meditation as listed, for example, in Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga* (C5th CE).¹

The *Visuddhimagga* describes how these *kammaṭṭhānas* can be utilized in the appropriate manner for the purpose of attaining the *jhānas* – the eight stages of meditative absorption. Also described as a part of the total process are methods for attaining three preliminary degrees of concentration, which are first mentioned in the *Abhidhamma*. These are: preparatory concentration (*parikamma samādhi*); which is followed by threshold, neighbourhood or access concentration (*upacāra samādhi*); which leads to attainment or fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and entry into the first *jhāna*.

These meditation techniques are drawn from the Pali *suttas*, and their use as the means of attaining the *jhānas* follows the standard explanation given in the *Abhidhamma* and the *Visuddhimagga*. In summary, the forty subjects are:

1. Ten *kaṣiṇas* (objects). A *kaṣiṇa* is a physical object that provides external help in creating a mentally visualized image (*nimitta*) of the object. A practitioner, for example, may set up a coloured disc a few feet away, perhaps fixed to a wall. The ordinary perception and mental image of this *kaṣiṇa* is known as the preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*) and the corresponding degree of concentration is called *parikamma samādhi*. The attention is focused on the *kaṣiṇa* and its preparatory *nimitta* until an image that is independent of the object forms in the mind. This is called a learnt or acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*). Further concentrated attention is directed internally towards this mental image until it becomes clear and stable, and all sense activity is suspended. This is known as the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). With the concentration thus developed (which is *upacāra samādhi*, threshold concentration), the practitioner has reached the point of being able to move on to *appanā samādhi* (fixed concentration) and to enter the first *jhāna* or level of mental absorption, from which the successively higher levels of *jhāna* can be attained.

The ten *kaṣiṇas* are: earth (*paṭhavī*); water (*āpa*); air (*vāyu*); fire (*teja*); blue (*nīla*); yellow (*pīṭa*); red (*lohita*); white (*odāta*); space (*ākāsa*), such as an aperture in something; and either consciousness (*viññāṇa*) in the Pali *suttas*, or light (*āloka*) in later texts. The method is to concentrate on an external object, and then to close the eyes and try to see or form a mental image of the object. If the image fades, then the practitioner opens his eyes, and concentrates once again on the external object. Repetition of the process ultimately leads to the ability to retain a mental image of the object, without the mind wandering off. With increasing concentration, the preparatory image leads to the acquired, which leads to the counterpart. Meditation of this sort can lead, through the three initial levels of *samādhi* (concentration), up to the first *jhāna*.

2. Ten *asubhas* (foul, unpleasant, or repulsive subjects), reflection on which leads to attainment of the first *jhāna*. The ten subjects recommended by Buddhaghosa for reflection arise from contemplating ten successive stages in the decomposition of a dead body: bloated (*uddhumātaka*); blackish and discoloured (*vinīlaka*); festering (*vipubbaka*); breaking apart due to decay (*vicchiddaka*); gnawed by animals (*vikkhāyitaka*); scattered in pieces (*vikkhittaka*); hacked and scattered (*hatavikkhittaka*); blood-stained (*lohitaka*); worm-infested (*pulavaka*); and bones (*aṭṭhika*). Traditionally, the practitioner would go to a graveyard, often at night, and, finding a suitable corpse or part thereof, would commence meditation. The intention was to turn the mind away from attachment to the body and the things of the senses. In the *Girimānanda Sutta*, the Buddha lists thirty-one parts of the body as suitable subjects to dwell upon for the purpose of developing a recognition or awareness of bodily unpleasantness (*asubha-saññā*).²
3. Ten *anussatis* (recollections, mindfulnesses). Ten subjects for recollection and reflection, comprising two groups – one of six and the other of four. The group of six are: reflection on the virtues and attributes of the Buddha (*buddhānussati*); of the Buddhist path and teaching (*dhammānussati*); of the Buddhist community (*sanghānussati*); of virtuous behaviour (*sīlānussati*); of generosity (*cāgānussati*); and of heavenly beings (*devatānussati*). The group of four are: mindfulness of death (*marāṇasati*); reflection on the thirty-two impure parts of the body (*kāyagatāsati*); mindfulness of in-breathing and out-breathing (*ānāpānasati*); and recollection of peace (*upasamānussati*). Of these, Buddhaghosa asserts that reflection on the body (*kāyagatāsati*) will lead the practitioner to the first *jhāna*, mindfulness of breathing to all four *jhānas*, and the remainder to *upacāra samādhi*, which refers to the concentration attained upon approaching the threshold of fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and entry into the first *jhāna*.³
4. Four *brahmavihāras* (sublime abodes, immeasurable states), also called the four *appamaññās* (illimitables), which are: lovingkindness (*mettā*); compassion (*karuṇā*); genuine happiness over the welfare of others (*muditā*); and equanimity, neutrality, or evenness of mind (*upekkhā*). Buddhaghosa says that the first three of these meditations can result in attainment of three of the *jhānas*, while meditation on *upekkhā* will result in attainment of the fourth. However, not all authorities are in agreement about which *jhānas* can be reached by which practices.
5. Four formless realms (*arūpāyatana*), which are the objects of meditation for the four higher or *arūpa-jhānas*. The practitioner selects one of the four

higher realms that comprise *arūpaloka* (formless realm) and meditates on it until he becomes one with the object of his meditation. The four formless realms are: the realm of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), the realm of boundless consciousness (*viññāṇañcāyatana*), the realm of no-thingness (*ākiñcaññāyatana*), and the realm of neither-knowing-nor-not-knowing (*nevasaññā-nāsaññāyatana*).

6. Two additional reflections that may lead to *upacāra samādhi* (threshold concentration), bringing a person closer to the first *jhāna*. These are firstly, consciousness of the repulsiveness of food (*āhāre paṭikkūla-saññā*), which entails consideration of the nature of food – how it rapidly loses its appeal once it has been chewed, swallowed and digested, requiring elimination of the waste and producing a bad smell, *etc.* The idea is to detach the practitioner from the enjoyment of food and the sensory pleasure of taste.⁴ Secondly, meditation on the four elements (*cātu-dhātuvavatthāna*). In this practice, the practitioner selects an object relating to one of the four elements and uses it as a focus for concentration, in the same manner as a *kaṣiṇa*.

The *kammaṭṭhānas* are primarily intended as a means of approaching the three initial *samādhis* and the four lower and four higher *jhānas* (meditative absorptions). They are regarded as specific ways of countering particular traits and weaknesses; and because not all *kammaṭṭhānas* are suited to everyone, meditation teachers allocate different topics or subjects to their students, according to personal temperament, strengths, weaknesses, and so on. According to the Pali analytical literature, people are of six fundamental temperaments, which are listed in a well-known eleventh- or twelfth-century summary of the *Abhidhamma*:

Rāga (lust) is predominant in some, while *dosa* (anger, hatred, or ill will) predominates in others. Most people belong to these two categories (*i.e. rāga-carita* and *dosa-carita*). There are a few others who lack intelligence and are more or less ignorant (*moha-carita*). Akin to the ignorant are those whose minds oscillate, unable to focus their attention deliberately on one thing (*vitakka-carita*). By nature, some are exceptionally devout (*saddhā-carita*), while others are exceptionally intelligent (*buddhi-carita*).

Nārada Mahāthera, on Abhidhammattha Sangaha 9:2, ASAM p.441

Different subjects of meditation (*bhāvanā*) – also translated as mental culture, development or refinement – are considered suitable for these different temperaments:

With respect to temperaments, the ten foulnesses (*asubhas*) and mindfulness (*anussati*) regarding the body, such as the thirty-two parts, are suitable for those of a lustful temperament.

The four illimitables (*appamaññās*) and the four coloured *kaṣiṇas* are suitable for those of a hateful temperament.

The reflection on breathing is suitable for those of an unintelligent and (mentally) rambling temperament.

The six reflections (*anussatis*) on the Buddha and so forth are suitable for those of a devout temperament; reflection on death, peace, perception and analysis for those of an intellectual temperament; and all the remaining subjects of mental culture (*bhāvanā*) are suitable for everyone.

Of the *kaṣiṇas* a wide one is suitable for the unintelligent, and a small one for the rambling.

Anuruddha, Abhidhammattha Sangaha 9:3; cf. ASAM p.436

Buddhaghosa adds that meditation on the four *brahmavihāras* will help those of a hateful nature, while mindfulness of the in- and out-breaths are regarded as universally suitable, but especially for those with active minds and who are fond of speculation.⁵ Like all great mystics, the Buddha was able to know at a glance the inner character of those who came to him, and it is said that he was therefore able to prescribe the right *kammaṭṭhāna* for each individual. Not having the requisite spiritual development, later teachers lacked this ability. This is regarded as the reason why, with the passage of time, the number of *kammaṭṭhānas* in common use declined.

In the Kammaṭṭhāna Forest Tradition, generally known in the West as the Thai Forest Tradition – a Thai reformist movement founded by Phra Ajahn Sao Kantasīlo (1861–1941) and Phra Ajahn Mun Bhuridatta (1870–1949) – monks are taught the practice of ‘mindfulness immersed in the body’. At the time of ordination, they are instructed in five *kammaṭṭhānas* in order to cultivate this practice, viz. the hair on the head (*kesa*), the hair on the body (*loma*), nails (*nakha*), teeth (*danta*), and skin (*taca*). For this reason, monks of this tradition are called *kammaṭṭhāna* monks, which distinguishes them from monks whose methods of meditation are linked to Thai indigenous religion. In Myanmar, where the resurgence of the Forest Tradition has been closely allied to that of Thailand, meditation masters are known as *kammaṭṭhanācāriyas*.

See also: **jhāna**.

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3–11, PTSV pp.84–372.
2. *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:60, *Girimānanda Sutta*, PTSA5 p.109.
3. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 7:66, 87, 99, 105, 113, 117, 8:7, 24, 40, 143, 155, PTSV pp.212, 217, 221–22, 224–25, 230, 234, 238–39, 266, 269.

4. *Anguttara Nikāya* 7:46, *Vitthatasattasaññā Sutta*, *PTSA4* pp.49–50.
5. See e.g. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:121, *PTSV* p.114.

kānhuà Chán (C), **kannazen** (J), **kanhwa Sōn** (Korean) *Lit.* meditation (*chán*) by investigation (*kān*) of words (*huà*); in *Chán* and *Zen* Buddhism, observation-of-the-phrase meditation, observing-the-critical-phrase meditation; meditation by investigation or observation of the particular meditation topic; questioning meditation; meditation on a *kōan* (C. *gōng àn*, a paradoxical anecdote, saying, or riddle) with the intention of reaching enlightenment; a method pioneered by the Chinese *Línjì* (J. *Rinzai*) *Chán* school and carried forward by the Japanese *Rinzai* school; contrasted with the *mòzhào* (J. *mokushō*, silent illumination) method used by the *Cáodòng* (J. *Sōtō*) school, who use *kōans* as a teaching aid (many collections of *kōans* have been compiled by *Sōtō* monks), but not as a form of meditation.

The systematizing of *kānhuà Chán* and the use of *gōng àns* as a method of meditation first becomes evident during the early *Sòng* dynasty (960–1279) in the writings of the *Chán* master Dàhuì Zōnggǎo (1089–1163) of the *Línjì* school.¹ The practice evolved out of the increasing popularity of the *gōng àn* during the late *Táng* and early *Sòng* dynasties, when collections of the sayings of *Chán* masters or their brief dialogues with disciples or others, along with further comments from later masters, were in circulation. An individual recorded incident or mini-dialogue was known as a *gōng àn* – a ‘public case’ or ‘public record’ cited by later masters with the intention of deepening a student’s understanding of Buddhist principles and the true nature of the *Dharma*. The citation also gained credence from the authority of earlier masters of the same lineage. Masters would also give particular *gōng àns* to their disciples for their deep consideration.

During the twelfth century, inner reflection on the meaning of these *gōng àns* was developed into a specific form of meditation. Dàhuì’s teacher, Yuánwù Kèqín (1063–1135), is well known for having added a commentary to a collection of *gōng àns* known as the *Biyán lù* (J. *Hekiganroku*, ‘Blue Cliff Record’). Dàhuì elaborated on Yuánwù Kèqín’s work and, in his letters and discourses,² he encouraged his students, many of whom were among the educated elite who ran the country, to make the *gōng àns* into a “topic of meditative enquiry (*huàtóu*, ‘subject head’),” rather than simply a subject for consideration. He taught them to focus on the crucial word or phrase of the *gōng àn* that encapsulated its essence. Good relationships with this elite were important, since it was they who determined funding and the appointment of abbots to the various monasteries. Dàhuì taught that meditation on the *huàtóu* could be “carried out by laymen in the midst of their daily activities”.³

Probably the best-known *huàtóu* is the answer “*wú* (J. *mu*, ‘no’),” given by master Zhàozhōu Cōngshěn (778–897) to a question posed by a monk

according to the well-known *kōan*, “Does a dog have a *buddha*-nature?”⁴ The answer is enigmatic since, according to the *Zen* perspective, the *buddha*-nature is all pervading, so everything has a *buddha*-nature, including a dog. In one interpretation, Zhàozhōu’s intention was to point out the distinction between direct personal experience and an intellectual or conceptual understanding of the *buddha*-nature. *Kānhuà Chán* is sometimes understood to mean ‘investigation of the keyword’, the keyword being *wú*, since this is the most commonly chosen *gōng àn*. In fact, in the Korean tradition, many monks spend an entire monastic life meditating on this one *huàtóu* (K. *hwadu*).

Dàhuì explains that the meditation begins with “investigating the meaning” of the *huàtóu*. Since an unenlightened mind is unable to comprehend fully the meaning of Zhàozhōu’s *wú* in personal experience, the result is an inevitable sense of confusion and doubt (*yíqíng*). Dàhuì believed that this essential, even primeval, doubt or lack of understanding is what needs to be recognized and pierced in order to attain enlightenment. “All the myriad doubts,” he says, “are just one doubt. If you can shatter the doubt you have on the *huàtóu*, then all the myriad doubts will at once be shattered (too).”⁵ Once this essential doubt is recognized and becomes a dominant factor in the mind, the meditator lets go of trying to conceptualize or intellectualize the meaning of Zhàozhōu’s *wú*, and starts to focus just on the word itself. At this point, says Dàhuì, the *huàtóu* becomes a ‘live word (*huójù*)’. With further focused practice, the doubt becomes increasingly intense, until the yearning for understanding leads to an inner ‘explosion (*pò*)’ or flood of insight that eradicates the conceptualizing self, resulting in a direct enlightened awareness that all things are an interconnected part of a single whole.

In later times, with the merging of *kānhuà Chán* with the Pure Land practice of *niànfó* (recitation of the name of Buddha Amitābha), practitioners made a *huàtóu* out of the query, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” The query is equivalent to the age-old question posed by human beings in search of spiritual Truth, “Who am I?” or “What am I?” As with the *huàtóu* “*wú*,” the question leads to the realization that there is no individual self, but all things are one.

See also: **kōan, mòzhào Chán.**

1. For many details in this entry, see “kanhua Chan,” *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism*, PDB.
2. See Dàhuì *pǔjué chánshī yǔlù* (‘Chronological Biography of Dàhuì’), T47 1998A.
3. See Stuart Lachs, *Hua-T’ou*, HTZM p.3.
4. *Mumonkan*, Case 1.
5. Dàhuì *pǔjué chánshī yǔlù*, T47 1998A:930a14–15, in HZZS p.109.

kapāla-bhāti (H) *Lit.* shining (*kapāla*) skull (*bhāti*); one of the *śaṭ-karmas* of *haṭha yoga*. See **haṭha yoga**.

karma-mudrā (S), **las kyi phyag rgya** (T), **jiémó yìn** (C) *Lit.* action (*karma*, *las kyi*, *jiémó*) seal (*mudrā*, *phyag rgya*, *yìn*); seal or symbol of action; in Tibetan Buddhism, one of the four seals of *anuttara-yoga tantra*. See **mahāmudrā**.

kaśiṇa (S/Pa) *Lit.* whole, entire, total, universal; an object or device used as a focus for concentration in meditation, especially in the Buddhist *Theravāda* tradition; a visualization device; ten meditation objects mentioned in the Pali *suttas* and elaborated upon in the *Abhidhamma* (systematic analysis of the *suttas*), the *sutta* commentaries and allied literature such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, as ten of the forty meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).¹

According to the Pali *suttas*² and some other texts such as the *Paṭisambhīdāmagga* ('Path of Analytic Knowledge') and *Nettipakaraṇa* ('Guide Book'),³ the ten *kaśiṇas* are those of: earth (*paṭhavī*); water (*āpa*); fire (*teja*); air or wind (*vāyu*); blue (*nīla*); yellow (*pīṭa*); red (*lohita*); white (*odāta*); space (*ākāsa*); and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). However, the details of how to meditate on the *kaśiṇas* are only outlined in the *suttas*, although – according to the *Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta* – the Buddha says that such meditation leads to “perfection” and the highest, “direct knowledge”, although little is said concerning the actual technique employed:

Udāyin, I have explained to my disciples how to cultivate the ten *kaśiṇa* devices. Someone contemplates the earth *kaśiṇa* above, below, and across, undivided and immeasurable. Another contemplates the water *kaśiṇa*, ... the fire *kaśiṇa*, ... the air *kaśiṇa*, ... the blue *kaśiṇa*, ... the yellow *kaśiṇa*, ... the red *kaśiṇa*, ... the white *kaśiṇa*, ... the space (*ākāsa*) *kaśiṇa*, ... the consciousness (*viññāṇa*) *kaśiṇa* above, below and across, undivided and immeasurable. And thereby many disciples of mine abide, having reached the perfection and consummation of direct knowledge.

Majjhima Nikāya 77, Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta, PTSM2 pp.14–15; cf. MDBB p.640

In later sources, such as Buddhaghosa's *Visuddhimagga*, the space *kaśiṇa* is qualified as the “limited-space (*paricchinna*) *kaśiṇa*” and the light (*āloka*) *kaśiṇa* replaces the consciousness *kaśiṇa*. Buddhaghosa also reverses the order of these two.⁴ The light *kaśiṇa* is probably an extension or a clarification of a form of meditation mentioned by the Buddha in the Pali *suttas* as *āloka-saññā* (perception of light).⁵ The space *kaśiṇa* has probably been

qualified as ‘limited’ to distinguish it from the realm of boundless space (*ākāsānañcāyatana*), the first of the four higher *arūpa-jhānas* (formless or immaterial meditative absorptions) experienced in *arūpaloka* (formless or immaterial realm).

The techniques of meditation using a *kaṣiṇa* receive detailed coverage in the analytical, commentarial and other literature,⁶ the text generally regarded as a classic on the subject being Buddhaghosa’s *Visuddhimagga*. As a physical object, a *kaṣiṇa* provides external help in creating a mentally visualized image (*nimitta*) of the object. A practitioner, for example, may set up a coloured disc at a distance of a few feet. The ordinary perception of this *kaṣiṇa* is known as a preparatory image (*parikamma nimitta*). If the eyes are closed, this image may persist for some time, but is likely to be unstable. The attention is therefore focused on the *kaṣiṇa* until a more stable, clear and detailed image of it forms in the mind. This is called an acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), which becomes the focus of the concentrated attention. The practitioner may at this stage even leave the place where the *kaṣiṇa* is set up.

Further concentrated attention is directed towards the acquired mental image until it becomes clear and stable, and all sense activity is suspended. This is known as the representational or counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*). The counterpart image does not duplicate the *kaṣiṇa* itself or the acquired image; it represents the abstract or essential nature of the *kaṣiṇa* object. It also becomes self-luminous, such that the *paṭibhāga nimitta* of an earth *kaṣiṇa*, for instance, may appear like the moon, that of a water *kaṣiṇa* like a mirror in the sky, or that of a red *kaṣiṇa* like a red gemstone. Moreover, this mental image can be intentionally manipulated by the meditator. The concentration thus developed is known as *upacāra samādhi*, threshold or neighbourhood concentration, because it has led the meditator to the neighbourhood or threshold of the first of the four *jhānas*. Further concentration on this internal image leads to fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) and attainment of the first *jhāna*.

The term *kaṣiṇa* implies a ‘universality’, ‘generality’, or ‘entirety’. In the context of a meditation object, it refers to an external object or device representing the ‘generality’ or primordial quality of, say, ‘earth’ or ‘blueness’, and so on. *Kaṣiṇas* to be used for concentration in meditation can hence be found in nature or can be made by the practitioner. They can be fixed or portable.

Five of the *kaṣiṇas* relate to the five *mahābhūtas*, the primary ‘elements’ or ‘principles’ of which the material world consists. Buddhaghosa begins his description with a lengthy chapter on the earth *kaṣiṇa*.⁷ An earth *kaṣiṇa* can be sketched out on the ground or on a wall, or it can be prepared from sticks and cloth daubed with clay. Buddhaghosa provides detailed, practical instructions, according to the circumstances prevailing in his day. Here, “a span and four fingers” is equivalent to about twelve inches or thirty centimetres, a span measuring from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger

of an outstretched hand. Avoiding any confusing conflict of colours with the four colour *kaṣiṇas*, a practitioner

should make the *kaṣiṇa* of clay like that in the stream of the Ganges, which is the colour of the dawn. And he should make it not in the middle of the monastery in a place where novices, *etc.*, are about, but on the outskirts of the monastery, in a screened place, either under an overhanging rock or in a leaf hut. He can make it either portable or as a fixture.

Of these, a portable one should be made by tying rags of leather or matting onto four sticks and smearing thereon a disc of the size already mentioned, using clay picked clean of grass, roots, gravel and sand, and well kneaded. . . .

A fixture should be made by knocking stakes into the ground in the form of a lotus calyx, lacing them over with creepers. If the clay is insufficient, then other clay should be put underneath, and a disc a span and four fingers across made on top of that with the completely pure, dawn-coloured clay. . . .

So, having thus made it . . . of the size prescribed, he should scrape it down with a stone trowel – a wooden trowel turns it a bad colour, so that should not be employed – and make it as even as the surface of a drum. Then he should sweep the place out and have a bath. On his return he should seat himself on a well-covered chair with legs a span and four fingers high, prepared in a place that is two and a half cubits (a cubit is the length of a forearm) from the *kaṣiṇa* disc. For the *kaṣiṇa* will not appear clearly to him if he sits further away than that; and if he sits closer than that, faults in the *kaṣiṇa* will be visible. If he sits higher up, he has to look at it with his neck bent; and if he sits lower down, his knees ache.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:24–26, PTSV pp.123–24; cf. PPVM pp.118–20

Buddhaghosa continues his instruction on how to proceed. Seated comfortably, as instructed, the practitioner should first mentally prepare and inspire himself for meditation. “He should consider the dangers inherent in sense desires, beginning, ‘There is little gratification in sensual pleasures,’⁸ and he should arouse a longing to escape from sensual pleasures, for their renunciation is the means of overcoming all suffering.” Next, he should inculcate “happiness” at the thought of “the special qualities of the Buddha, the *Dhamma* (teaching, path), and the *sangha* (Buddhist community)”; then “awe” at the thought of all the great ones who have followed the same path before him; and finally, “eagerness” at the thought of enjoying the “bliss of (inner) seclusion”.

Having established a positive state of mind, he should begin the contemplation. With eyes neither too wide open nor too narrowed, he should “apprehend

the image (*nimitta*), and so proceed to develop it". He should concentrate upon and try to develop the preparatory mental image (*parikamma nimitta*) of the external *kaṣiṇa*:

If he opens his eyes too wide, they will get fatigued and the (external) disc will become too obvious, which will prevent the (mental) image (*nimitta*) from becoming apparent to him. If he opens them too little, the disc will not be obvious enough, and his mind will become drowsy, which will also prevent the image becoming apparent to him. So he should develop the practice by apprehending the image (*nimitta*), keeping his eyes open moderately, as if he were seeing the reflection of his face (*mukha nimitta*) on the surface of a looking glass.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:28, PTSV p.125; cf. PPVM p.119

Without giving undue attention to the colour of the *kaṣiṇa*, the meditator should repeat some word that summarizes for him, mentally, the encompassing nature of the *kaṣiṇa* – in this case earth. Buddhaghosa suggests names

such as 'earth' (*paṭhavī*), 'the great one (*mahī*)', 'the friendly one (*medinī*)', 'ground (*bhūmi*)', 'the provider of wealth (*vasudhā*)', 'the bearer of wealth (*vasudhāra*)', etc., whichever suits his manner of thinking. Nevertheless, 'earth' is a name that is obvious, and it can be cultivated ... by saying "earth, earth (*paṭhavī, paṭhavī*)". To this, the attention should be turned, now with eyes open, now with eyes shut. And he should go on cultivating it in this way a hundred times, a thousand times, and even more than that, until the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*) arises.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:29, PTSV p.125; cf. PPVM p.120

Repetition of the name helps to keep the mind focused, while at the same time the practitioner tries to move from looking at the external *kaṣiṇa* to the preparatory mental image (*parikamma nimitta*) of it, and thence to the acquired *nimitta*. Once this has been accomplished, he can return to his quarters, carefully holding the acquired *nimitta* in mind. Here, Buddhaghosa offers some practical suggestions in case, on the way, he should lose the image, perhaps through meeting someone, and the ensuing encounter, greeting or conversation should disturb his tenuous grasp on the mental image:

When, while he is cultivating the *nimitta* in this way, and it comes into focus as he turns his attention to it with his eyes shut, appearing exactly as it does when his eyes are open, then the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*) is said to have been produced. After its production, he should no longer sit in that place; he should return to his own

quarters, and go on developing it, sitting there. But in order to avoid the delay of foot washing, a pair of single-soled sandals and a walking stick are desirable. Then, if the new concentration vanishes through some unsuitable encounter, he can put his sandals on, take his walking stick, and go back to the place to re-apprehend the sign there. When he returns, he should seat himself comfortably and develop it by repeated reversion to it, and by striking at it with initial thought (*vitakka*) and applied thought (*vicāra*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:30, PTSV p.125; cf. PPVM p.120

Among the primary obstacles in the way of entry into the *jhānas* (meditative absorptions) are the five hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) of: sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*) of any kind in the field of the five senses; ill will (*vyāpāda*) of any sort; sloth and torpor (*thīna-middha*); restlessness and anxiety (*uddhacca-kukkucca*); and wavering doubt or lack of conviction (*vicikicchā*). Buddhaghosa says that concentration upon the acquired image leads to suppression, at least temporarily, of the five hindrances, permitting the emergence of the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) and its associated threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*):

As he does so, the hindrances (*nīvaraṇas*) eventually become suppressed, the defilements subside, the mind will become concentrated with threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), and the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) will arise.

The difference between the earlier acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*) and the counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*) is this. In the acquired image (*uggaha nimitta*), any fault in the *kasiṇa* is apparent. But the counterpart image appears as if it is breaking out from the acquired image, and a hundred times, a thousand times more purified, like a looking-glass disc drawn from its case, like a well-washed mother-of-pearl dish, like the moon's disc coming out from behind a cloud, like cranes against a thunder cloud. But it has neither colour nor shape; for if it had, it would be perceptible by the eye, gross, and susceptible of comprehension. . . . And as soon as it arises, the hindrances (*nīvaraṇa*) are suppressed, the defilements subside, and the mind becomes concentrated in threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:31, PTSV pp.125–26; cf. PPVM pp.120–21

The counterpart image, Buddhaghosa also says, is devoid of material qualities, being an entirely mental manifestation. After a brief discussion of threshold and fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*), he then intimates how difficult it is to produce the counterpart image and, once attained, how preciously such concentration should be preserved:

To produce a counterpart image (*paṭibhāga nimitta*), which arises along with threshold concentration (*upacāra samādhi*), is very difficult. Therefore, if he is able to arrive at fixed concentration (*appanā samādhi*) in that same session by further developing the image (*nimitta*), that is good. If not, then he must guard the image diligently as if it were the foetus of a wheel-turning monarch (*cakkavattin*, universal ruler).

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:34, PTSV p.126; cf. PPVM p.122

Buddhaghosa then goes on to discuss various aspects of concentration and the *jhānas*, and the practices required for successful entry into them. Among these is the technique for increasing the extent of the *nimitta*, either the acquired or the counterpart *nimitta*. A similar and perhaps clearer account of this is given in the *Vimuttimagga* ('Path of Freedom'), attributed to Arahanta Upatissa:

The (image of the) *kaṣiṇa*, which is a span and four fingers at the start, should be gradually increased. Thus should he contemplate, and gradually he will be able to increase the size easily. Let him progressively increase it to the size of a wheel, a canopy, the shadow of a tree, a cultivated field, a small neighbourhood, a village, a walled village, and a city. Thus should he progress gradually, until he fills the entire earth. He should not contemplate on such things as rivers, mountains, heights, depths, trees and protuberances, all of which are uneven (and will cause mental confusion); he should contemplate on earth as if it were the great ocean. Increasing it in this way, he attains distinction in meditation.

Arahanta Upatissa, Vimuttimagga 4, PTST p.414; cf. PFVM p.80

Buddhaghosa adds that the meditator should decide in advance the

successive sizes of the image (*nimitta*) ... just as a ploughman delimits, with the plough, the area to be ploughed, and then ploughs within the area delimited. ... After that has been done, he can further extend it, doing so by delimiting successive boundaries of, say, a span, a *ratana* (two spans), the veranda, the surrounding space, the monastery, and the boundaries of the village, the town, the district, the kingdom and the ocean, making the extreme limit the world sphere or even beyond.

Just as young swans that are first starting to use their wings fly a little distance at a time, and by gradually increasing it eventually reach the presence of the sun and moon, so too when a *bhikkhu* extends the image by successive delimitations in the way described, he can extend it up to the limit of the world sphere or even beyond.

Buddhaghosa, Visuddhimagga 4:127–28, PTSV pp.152–53; cf. PPVM p.145

Buddhaghosa then goes on to describe the practice and benefits of the other *kaṣiṇas*.⁹ These practices, he says, parallel that of the earth *kaṣiṇa* with only a few minor differences. A water *kaṣiṇa*, for instance, may be a bowl or “four-footed water pot, full to the brim” with clear or any other water that has been “strained through a cloth”. He should then focus his mind on the essential nature of water (*āpa*), choosing some word that summarizes it for him, “such as ‘rain (*ambu*)’, ‘liquid (*udaka*)’, ‘dew (*vari*)’, or ‘fluid (*salila*)’”. Then “he should develop the *kaṣiṇa* preferably by using the obvious ‘water, water (*āpa, āpa*)’.” Following this, the acquired and counterpart images will, in due course, appear. Any faults in the *kaṣiṇa*, such as bubbles and froth, will be present in the acquired image, but the counterpart image is “inactive, like a crystal fan set in space, like the disc of a looking-glass made of crystal”. From there the meditator goes on to attain the four lower *jhānas*.

Instructions for practising the other *kaṣiṇas* follow a similar pattern. For the fire *kaṣiṇa*, a wood fire is to be viewed through a round hole in a rush mat, “a span and four fingers” in diameter. An appropriate name should be selected to embody the essential concept of heat, understanding its colour to be not so much colour as a part of what produces the heat. Again, several names for repetition are suggested, the preference being “fire, fire (*teja, teja*)”. In this instance, the acquired image may contain “a burning branch, or a pile of glowing embers, or ashes, or smoke”, but the counterpart image “appears motionless like a piece of red cloth set in space, like a gold fan, like a gold column”.

The air *kaṣiṇa* can be established by looking at something that moves in the wind, like the tops of sugarcane, bamboo, trees or hair, or the feeling of air as it comes through a window or hole in the wall and blows upon the body. In this instance, the acquired image swirls like “steam over hot rice gruel just removed from the oven”, and the counterpart image is “quiet and motionless”.

Blue, yellow, red and white *kaṣiṇas* can be formed on a flat tray or basket, using a coloured, bunched-up cloth, or a cloth spread over the rim like the covering of a drum, or suitably coloured flowers, arranged so that only the petals are showing, with stalks and stamens hidden. It can also be a disc arranged on a stand or on a wall, like the earth *kaṣiṇa*, using some suitably coloured material. It can then be brought to mind by repeating “blue, blue”, or the appropriate name of the colour. Again, the acquired image will show the imperfections of the material *kaṣiṇa*, such as stalks and stamens and gaps between the petals; but the counterpart image “appears like a crystal fan in space, free from the *kaṣiṇa* disc”.

The light (*āloka*) *kaṣiṇa* can be a “circle thrown on a wall or a floor by sunlight or moonlight entering through a hole in a wall”, or a keyhole or window, “or when he sees a circle thrown on the ground by sunlight or moonlight coming through a gap in the branches of a dense-leaved tree or through a gap

in a hut made of closely packed branches”. If these are not available, “He can light a lamp inside a pot, close the pot’s mouth, make a hole in it, and place it with the hole facing a wall. The lamplight coming out of the hole throws a circle on the wall.” Repeating “light, light (*āloka, āloka*)”, the practitioner proceeds as before. “The acquired image is like a circle cast on the ground, and the counterpart image is like a compact, bright cluster of lights.”

A limited-space (*paricchinna*) *kasiṇa* is formed by making “a hole a span and four fingers wide in a well-thatched hut, or in a piece of leather, or in a rush mat, and so on. He should develop one of these, or a hole such as a hole in a wall, by repeating ‘space, space (*ākāsa, ākāsa*)’.”

Buddhaghosa prefaces the description of each of these *kasiṇas* with the observation that anyone who has practised this kind of meditation in a past life will find that the *nimitta* automatically appears in their mind when confronted by a suitable trigger. Thus, a brown patch of ploughed field will bring an earth *nimitta* to mind; or a pool or any expanse of water will bring a water *nimitta* to mind. Similarly, seeing any kind of flame or fire, or vegetation swaying in the wind, or an appropriately coloured flowering bush, or a circular patch of light on the floor, or a hole in a wall or window opening – these automatically bring to mind the related *nimitta* in one who has practised that form of *kasiṇa* meditation in a past life. In this regard, he relates a number of stories. A certain elder, he says, boarded a ship to sail to India in order to lead the life of a renunciate, and, “As he gazed at the ocean meanwhile, the *kasiṇa* image (*nimitta*), the counterpart (*paṭibhāga*) of that ocean, arose in him.”

Various powers are attributed to those who practise *kasiṇa* meditation, many of them drawn from passages in the Pali *suttas*. In his summary, Buddhaghosa says that meditation on the earth *kasiṇa* develops the power of “Being one, he becomes many.”¹⁰ Meditation on the water *kasiṇa* develops the power of “diving in and out of the earth,¹¹ causing rain, storms, creating rivers and seas, and making the earth and rocks and palaces quake”.¹² Meditation on the fire, white and light *kasiṇas* develops the divine eye (*dibba-cakkhu*), which includes the ability to see all that is happening in heaven and earth, whether near or far, including knowledge of the death and rebirth of all sentient beings, in accordance with their good and bad deeds (*kamma*). Analogous powers are attributed to meditation on the other *kasiṇas*.

He concludes, however, that those living beings will not be able to cultivate the *kasiṇas* who are hampered by bad *kamma* (S. *karma*) or impurity; who entertain erroneous views; whose destiny is founded on little that is positive; who lack faith in the Buddha, the *Dhamma*, and the *sangha*; who are devoid of zeal and understanding; and who are incapable of following the “noble path” in the right way and with the right attitude. In fact, he adds, not only will they be unable to cultivate the *kasiṇas*, they will be unable to meditate on any of the recommended meditation subjects (*kammaṭṭhāna*).

Although specific meditation subjects are commonly recommended for practitioners of different temperaments, Buddhaghosa advises that meditation on a *kaṣiṇa* is suitable for those of all temperaments, although those of a hateful temperament can find help by meditating on the four colour *kaṣiṇas*.¹³

Kaṣiṇa meditation is still practised in present times. An informal and personal description of such meditation is provided by the Malaysian monk Venerable Sujiva in a *Dhamma* talk given in 1993:

We take an example from the *kaṣiṇas* meditative objects like colours, earth, *etc.* Let's say someone is practising the water *kaṣiṇa*. The water *kaṣiṇa* involves the visualization of water. Before reaching absorption (*jhāna*), there arises what we call a *nimitta*, a mental image, called a *uggaha nimitta*. *Uggaha nimitta* is the 'grasped (or acquired) object'. That means it is a direct replica of what you see as water. When you can do that, the mind is already very calm. Usually, in this state, you cannot be thinking about other things, because then you will not only see water, but the other things as well. You may see fish in the water or you may even see insects moving about. Sometimes, you may see your friend swimming in the water and, if desire arises, you may even see ladies swimming in the water! You may see them very clearly.

When you have the *uggaha nimitta*, you see the water very clearly, but the water may be moving. You see the water moving and the mind becoming one with the water. It is as if the mind is the water and the water is the mind; and it can be moving. At that time, it is not very close to blissful absorption (*jhāna*) yet. It is still some way off. But if the mind is almost one with the water and is focused on the surface of the water, you cannot think of anything else. You cannot be thinking about the body or anything else. You cannot be listening to what is going on outside, and you cannot be thinking about where you are either. At that time, the *nimitta* is called *uggaha nimitta*, 'grasped object'. It is *upacāra samādhi* (threshold concentration), but not yet the concentration that is very close to the *jhāna* (*i.e. appanā samādhi*). . . .

Now, if one is doing the water *kaṣiṇa* when the *uggaha nimitta* arises, the mind is one with the object as if the mind is the water and the water is the mind. Since the mind at that moment is not yet completely still, there will be movement. This means that the water which is the mind and the mind which is the water are still moving. . . . Another example is that, when doing the wind *kaṣiṇa*, the stage is reached where the mind is like the wind and the wind is like the mind, and the mind is moving as if the wind is blowing. . . .

As you progress and the concentration deepens, any movement within the object will cease, and it will become very still. The mind which is the water and the water which is the mind become very still

and very clear, completely transparent. Very bright. At this point, the mind will approach a stage that is extremely clear and extremely bright; if that happens, excitement sometimes arises and the concentration is broken. At this point, the mind also goes into what we call *paṭibhāga nimitta*, the ‘mirror image’, which is greatly purified. This is now much closer to blissful absorption, the first *jhāna*. But it is still not yet absorption.

Venerable Sujiva, *Access and Fixed Concentration*; cf. AFCS

See also: **āloka-saññā, jhāna, kammaṭṭhāna, nimitta.**

1. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:104–5, PTSV pp.110–11.
2. *Anguttara Nikāya* 10:25 (*Kasiṇa Sutta*), 10:29 (*Paṭhamakosala Sutta*), PTSA5 pp.46–47, 60; *Majjhima Nikāya* 77 (*Mahāsakuludāyī Sutta*), PTSM2 pp.14–15; *Dīgha Nikāya* 33 (*Sangīti Sutta*), PTSD3 pp.268, 290.
3. E.g. *Paṭisambhidāmagga* 1:72–81, 32:442, PTSP1 pp.6, 95; *Nettipakaraṇa* 524, PTSNK p.89, GNKT p.124.
4. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:105, 5:21–26, 36–37, PTSV pp.110, 174–76.
5. E.g. *Anguttara Nikāya* 4:41 (*Samādhi Bhāvanā Sutta*), 6:29 (*Udāyī Sutta*), 7:58 (*Pacalāyana Sutta*), PTSA2 p.45, PTSA3 p.323, PTSA4 p.86; *Dīgha Nikāya* 33, *Sangīti Sutta*, PTSD3 pp.222–23.
6. E.g. Nāgārjuna, *Mahāprajñāpāramitā Śāstra* 34:2, T25 1509:215b–c, TVW3 pp.1059–63.
7. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 4, PTSV pp.118–69; cf. PPVM pp.113–61.
8. *Majjhima Nikāya* 14, *Cūladukkhakkhandha Sutta*, PTSM1 p.91.
9. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 5, PTSV pp.170–77; cf. PPVM pp.162–68.
10. See *Dīgha Nikāya* 2, *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, PTSD1 p.78, TBLD p.105.
11. See *Dīgha Nikāya* 2, *Sāmaññaphala Sutta*, PTSD1 p.78, TBLD p.105.
12. See *Majjhima Nikāya* 37, *Cūlataṇhāsankhaya Sutta*, PTSM1 p.253.
13. Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga* 3:121, PTSV p.114; cf. PPVM p.109.

kavanah (He) *Lit.* intention, concentration; from the verbal root *k-v-n* (to straighten, to direct, to aim); used since medieval times by kabbalists, and from the eighteenth century onwards in Hasidism, to describe the focused or concentrated mind in prayer or meditation; regarded as a necessary element in devotion, prayer, and meditation; sometimes used for all forms of kabbalistic meditation.

Some kabbalists, like Isaac the Blind (C13th), also believed that observance of the 613 biblical commandments was an aspect of *kavanah*, understood as an external expression of service to the Divine. Such mystics taught that by praying in a focused manner, or by repeating the names of God with special concentration, one could achieve attachment to (*devekut*) and union with God.

According to the contemporary scholar Aryeh Kaplan, *kavanah* refers particularly to a type of meditation based on contemplation of levels of internal spiritual light, where the devotee elevates the mind from the level of *bahir* (brilliance) to *zohar* (radiance), finally ascending to the highest level of *Aur Ayn-Sof* (Infinite Light). This practice is described in *Sha'ar ha-Kavanah ha-Mekubalim ha-Rishonim* ('The Gate of Intention of the Early Kabbalists'), which is generally attributed to 'Azriel of Gerona (c. 1160–1238), a disciple of Isaac the Blind. It is one of the earliest works to try to bridge the gap between traditional prayer and mystical practice. 'Azriel describes (in an admittedly convoluted manner) the practice as one of concentrated, imaginative visualization, culminating in the experience of that which is visualized:

He who resolves upon something in his mind with a perfect firmness, for him it becomes the essential thing. Therefore, if you pray and pronounce the benedictions or otherwise truly wish to direct your *kavanah* (concentration) to something, imagine that you are light and that everything around you is light: light from every direction and every side. And in the light, a throne of light and on it, a 'brilliant light'; and opposite it, a throne and on it, a 'good light'.... And between them and above them, the light of the *kavod* (divine glory) and around it, the light of life. And above it, the crown of light....

And this illumination is unfathomable and infinite, and from its perfect glory proceed grace and benediction, peace and life for those who observe the path of its unification.... For according to the intensity of the *kavanah* – by which it (the illumination) draws strength to itself ... if no other reflection or desire is mixed with it, and if it grows in intensity through the power that guides it, in order to draw to itself the current that proceeds from *Ayn-Sof*, ... – then every thing and every act is accomplished according to its spirit and its will.... Then, it must elevate itself above them through the power of its *kavanah* and go into the depths, in order to eliminate the (mundane) path from its very essence and to pave a new way according to its own will....

And he who elevates himself in such a manner from word to word (repeating and contemplating on words), through the power of his intention, until he arrives at *Ayn-Sof*, must direct his *kavanah* in a manner corresponding to his perfection, so that not only is his will clothed in the higher, but that the higher will is enclosed in his. For the effluence (of the divine will) ... is like the inexhaustible Source that is never interrupted....

In this manner, the ancients used to spend some time in meditation (*hitbodedut*), before prayer, in order to divert all other thoughts and to determine the paths of their *kavanah* (during their subsequent prayer) and the power that was to be applied to its direction.... And this is

the path among the paths of prophecy (*nevu'ah*), upon which he who makes himself familiar with it will be capable of rising to the rank of prophecy (*nevu'ah*).

*'Azriel of Gerona, Sha'ar ha-Kavanah ha-Mekubalim ha-Rishonim,
in BKKS pp.511–12, 516; cf. in OKGS pp.417–19*

It seems that there was an early esoteric tradition concerning the application of one's *kavanah* to particular words of the written prayers that corresponded to and were linked with the various *midot* (divine qualities identified with the *sefirot*). Isaac the Blind taught that through meditation on the spoken word, a practitioner could ascend to the primordial Word – the primal divine quality, the higher *midah* (divine quality) to which the spoken word corresponds – and from there to the divine Thought (the source of all the *midot*), through which the practitioner could reach the *Ayn-Sof*.

Later kabbalists such as Isaac Luria (C16th) and Moshe Ḥayyim Luzzatto (C18th) believed that disharmony rules the cosmos. This disharmony is manifested at the level of the *sefirot*, since the divine power or energy that is supposed to flow between them has been disrupted and no longer flows in an orderly manner from the divine realms into creation. These kabbalists therefore taught special meditative techniques that were to be performed with total dedication and *kavanah*, for the purpose of repairing the disharmony, and ultimately restoring the divine Unity.

In Hasidic times, *kavanah* was used to designate the focused meditation or prayer that could invoke divine mercy. The Ba'al Shem Tov recounts a vision experienced during his prayers on the Day of Atonement (*Yom Kippur*), the holiest day of the Jewish year, when he sees that the prayers which the Jews had recited for fifty years are being held at a lower level. Through his *kavanah*, he is able to raise them to the divine level:

I had but one more gate to pass through to appear before God, blessed be He. In that palace I found all the prayers of the past fifty years that had not ascended, and now, because on this *Yom Kippur* we prayed with *kavanah*, all the prayers ascended. Each prayer shone as the bright dawn. I said to those prayers, “Why did you not ascend before?” And they said, “We were instructed to wait for you, sir, to lead us.” I told them: “Come along with me.” And the gate was open.

Ba'al Shem Tov, in Shivḥei ha-Besht 41, PBST p.56

The description illustrates the general principle that mystical experiences commonly reflect the belief system and religious imagery of the mystic.

See also: **kavanot**.